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# etty or The Old Grudge

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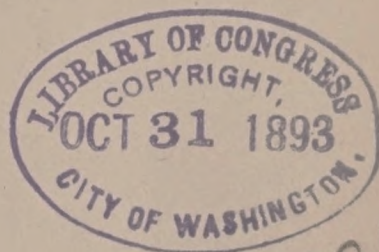
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BY

J. H. CONNELLY.

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# OUR HETTY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ON THE "DEVIL'S BACKBONE."



NOTABLY strange formation, among the scenic beauties of Western Pennsylvania, is the wall-like hill locally known as the Devil's Backbone, which is thrown half across the Raccoon Creek Valley. Though its elevation is hardly more than five hundred feet, the abruptness with which it rises

out of the meadow-lands, the straightness and length of the lofty line its summit makes against the sky and the absence of near rival eminences



cause it to seem, when viewed from the valley, a real mountain. Its top, for a length of about two miles, is level and straight, and is traversed by a road, one of the most charming drives imaginable, and not by any means so difficult of access as might be expected, since the slope at the end of the hill is so gradual that teams, drawing loaded wagons, ascend it with little difficulty. Through an alley of tall trees it runs, their boughs arching overhead and their dead leaves carpeting it. Smaller trees and shrubs fill the spaces between their great trunks, and make a wall of foliage on either side, through rifts in which, here and there, glimpses are afforded of blue sky and fleecy-white clouds drifting across it. Nowhere is the summit more than four or five rods in width.

One flank of the hill is steep, but not beyond a skillful and daring climber's scaling. The other, however, is like a stupendous wall. Denuded of its mask of foliage, that rocky face would be seen scarred, seamed and wrinkled by ages of passive resistance to the destroying forces of nature. Rain, frost, sunshine and wind have graved deeply their traces upon it. But, while the summer lasts at least, it is fresh and fair.

During all the season of foliage and bloom, one looking up from the valley can descry nothing of that time-furrowed face, but only its vivid mask from the summit down to the base ;



where the crystal creek has undermined it and where fishes, alarmed by the cattle plashing among the gravel on the farther side of the pool, dart across the reflected sky and through the inverted forest to find refuge among the never-lifting black shadows far beneath the rocks. All the nooks and crannies in that rugged wall are full of life. Foxes have their hiding-places in the caves; birds build their nests in safety in spots accessible only to things with wings; chipmunks and squirrels frolic and bark among the branches; snakes sun themselves on exposed points of rocks; owls blink and ponder in the deepest shadows; bees store their golden sweets secure from all despoilers; myriads of Nature's wild children here find homes, safe from each other and from the common enemy, man.

Late in the afternoon of a short, autumnal day, John Cameron, returning homeward from hunting in the distant hills, strode along the Devil's Backbone toward the valley. A big bunch of gray-squirrels upon his right shoulder showed that he had had good success; but evidently his hunt was not yet over. He moved almost noiselessly, his rifle lay ready on his left fore-arm, and he was keenly alert for any sight or sound betokening the presence of game. To his ears came the sigh of the forest, that is never hushed, and, through it the impudent barking of a foolish squirrel that, having caught sight of him, must needs proclaim the fact to the universe, instead



of prudently scampering away in silence to a place of safety. The crack of John's rifle sounding strangely small and sharp away up there where there was nothing to echo it, put an abrupt stop to the barking, and a little gray, furry lump tumbled from the top of a hickory tree to the ground, at the very brink of the precipice, and lay motionless. In the very act of stooping to pick up his game, John's keen eye caught sight of a thin, dirty-white, cotton string, tied to a little bush, close to the ground. It had been covered by leaves, and would have remained unseen, had not the squirrel's body knocked them away and exposed it.

Why should anybody have tied a string there? He laid down his gun and proceeded to investigate, hauling in two or three yards of the slack of the string which dangled over the face of the cliff. Then it broke.

"What the mischief is at the other end of it?" muttered John to himself.

He laid down, and, thrusting his body out perilously far over the edge of the precipice, tried in vain to see, among the rocks and bushes below, what held the other end of the string. Fifty feet below, a large hickory-tree seemed to be firmly rooted in a ledge of earth among the rocks, and one of its strong branches was only a few feet beyond his reach. He calculated that if he could get hold of that branch he might safely swing down by it to a dogwood tree of



smaller size, on the ledge he wished to reach. Of course, if his hold gave way, or the branch broke, he would go on down to the bottom of the precipice, and probably break everything frangible in his anatomy. But if he did not take that risk, he could not learn what was at the other end of the string. That settled the question of his making the attempt. Having in view a possible shot at a fox or rattlesnake when he got down there, he lowered his rifle by the string, to the ledge he purposed reaching. Then, by means of a long forked stick, he drew in to him the hickory branch, clutched it, swung off, and made the descent he had planned in safety. But the elucidation of the mystery had not yet been attained. The string continued on, still farther down, passing through a crevice in the rock, into which it had doubtless been blown by the wind when dangling free—and he had to make a second descent, even more perilous than the first, to reach a still lower ledge. This, too, he effected safely, having first sent his gun down ahead of him, as before, and at length he found the other end of the string.

It was tied to a small but heavy parcel, closely wrapped in a cloth that, as he unrolled it, seemed to bear blood-stains. Eleven solid silver spoons and a gold watch were in the package. Carefully wound around the watch, to protect it from dampness, was a strip of oiled silk, two feet long and three inches wide, upon which he



made out the initials, "W. S.," scratched as if by a pin-point. The watch was well worn, but had no marks by which it might be identified, excepting, perhaps, its number. Engraved upon the spoons, in florid, interlaced lines, was a monogram that might have been "R. B. W." or any other possible combination of those three letters.

"Mighty!" exclaimed John. "If 'finds is keeps,' as the boys say, it was worth while clambering down here."

Thrusting his prize in his pocket, and seeing no sign of a fox or any other game, he began casting about for means to get back to the top of the cliff. It is generally easier, in hill-climbing, to ascend than to descend safely, and, knowing this, he had not until now troubled himself about how he should return; but all rules have their exceptions, and he quickly realized that this was an exceptional case. Even if he could have got back to the first ledge, which was doubtful, the dogwood and hickory-trees would no longer serve him. He could not swing upward. A shimmer of Raccoon Creek was visible so far below him that he thought he was just about half-way between it and the moon.

"Consarn the string and all belonging to it, and the man who put it there!" he muttered.

The ledge upon which he stood was hardly ten feet long and not more than a yard in width. He sat down and cogitated.

"So long as I keep still, I'm safe enough;



and if I yell long enough, somebody on the road will hear me and help me out of this scrape, but that may not be for two or three days, so few go by this way. When the sun goes down, it's going to be colder than Greenland's icy mountains up here, and if I move around in my sleep, as I'm pretty sure to do if I'm cold, I'll fall far enough to bu'st a hole in the solid crust of the earth. It behooves me to yell."

Standing up and bracing himself for a stentorian effort, he shouted, at the top of his voice:

"Hello-o-o-o! Hello-o-o-o-o!"

A feeble echo, that seemed to come up from the meadow, was his only answer:

"Dern the man who tied that string and dern me for seven kinds of a fool!" he ejaculated, again sitting down, with his back against the rock.

About once in five minutes, he considered, would be often enough for him to let off a shout like that. No casual wayfarer on the road could get by in the intervals without hearing it. Just in front of him, an opening among the branches enabled a view of the valley, and he thought it had never before seemed so fair, possibly because it was—for the present, at least—so impossible of attainment.

Beyond the green, low-lying meadowland on the farther side of the creek stretched broad fields, irregularly alternating golden russet stubble with the black, fat loam, upturned for winter



wheat-sowing. Amid the gray indefiniteness of an orchard, away across the valley, he could just make out a roof and chimneys, from which smoke curled, and knew the spot as home—home that he might, perhaps, never see again. Still farther off, the Indian-summer haze deepened into an amethystine veil, in which the elevated horizon-line of forest melted by exquisite gradations of tint into the evening sky.







## CHAPTER II.

### JOHN'S RICOCHET SHOT.

"Dern all strings!" groaned John, bitterly, as he straightened himself up for another shout. But help was nearer than he imagined. His first "Hello-o-o-o!" was responded to by a shrill, boyish treble: "Hi-i-i!" from the summit of the hill, and the same voice, a moment later inquired:

"Where are you?"

"Down here, on the face of the bluff!"

"Thunder! How d'ye get there?"

"No matter about that. I want to get away."

"No matter about that! Stay where you are!"

"Go and get a rope and tie it about a tree for me to climb up by."

"Who was your nigger afore I took the job?"

"Ain't you Danny Mulveil, up there?"

"Maybe, and maybe not. Who are you, down there?"

"John Cameron."



The boy emitted a prolonged whistle expressive of his surprise.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed. "I want to see you where you can't help yourself nor get at a feller!"

In his eagerness to enjoy that spectacle, he threw himself down and crawled to the edge of the cliff, carelessly dislodging, in his haste, a shower of loose small stones and earth, that, rattling down about John's ears, caused him to utter a loud, apprehensive shout of:

"Hi! Look out what you're doing up there, or you'll be down on top of me!"

The boy chuckled. A brilliantly mischievous idea suggested itself to his mind—where its kind were always welcome.

"Say!" he demanded. "Ain't you mighty sorry now that you ever walloped a boy for findin' a watermelon in your patch?"

"Aha! Now I know it's you, Danny. No; I ought to have given you twice as much as I did. It would have done you good. Hi, there! Stop that! You young limb of Satan, stop it!" he cried, as another shower of stones and earth, heavier than before, fell upon him.

Danny rolled among the dead leaves and kicked up his heels in an ecstasy of delight.

"Say!" he resumed, gathering another pile of small missiles in readiness. "If a boy was to set his dog on your dog, would you larrup him like Sam Hill for it again?"

"It doesn't make any odds to you whether I











would or not. You go and fetch a rope or get somebody to help me. Hi, there! Quit that! Gol dern ye!"

The freckled-faced, red-headed little imp, laughing with such abandon that his tears blinded him, was digging earth from the edge of the cliff with a stick and tumbling it down.

"I'll break your back the first time I catch you!" yelled the angry man down below.

"Oho! You will? Then I'd best break yours first, while I have the chance."

And he recklessly let fall a hatful of stones that John had no little difficulty in dodging, and which excited him to such a vocal tempest that the hearing of it filled Danny's cup of happiness to the brim.

"I don't suppose," cried the thoroughly exasperated young man, "that it would be possible to kill you with a bullet, for you were born to be hanged; but I'm a goat if I don't try to wing you with a snap shot, once for luck, anyway."

Danny laughed more heartily than ever, at his fury, and sent down another lot of stones, some of which struck John and bruised him severely. Goaded to seriously attempting what he threatened, to save himself from being brained, young Cameron snatched up a flat stone and hastily fixed it in the fork of a small tree rising in front of the ledge upon which he stood, so that a bullet fired against it would ricochet to where Danny was operating. Then he caught



up his rifle, cocked it and waited, saying to himself between his set teeth :

“ I ’ll pop him, the first time he chirps.”

But he waited and listened in vain for the imp’s “ chirp.” Danny, inspired by a new idea of mischief, had suddenly decamped. Scampering swiftly up the road, he met his sister Hetty—a tall, graceful, handsome girl—who, with an axe upon her shoulder, was leisurely approaching.

The lad was not at all bad-hearted. He simply wanted fun. Unfortunately, that which commends itself as fun to the mind of a vigorous lively boy is generally characterized as deviltry by older persons, and Danny had a widespread reputation as an incorrigible imp. But he really meant no harm. He had a little spite against John Cameron, who had had occasion to switch him a few times—as almost every man in the township had, more or less—but his spite was not enough to prompt a desire to do any real injury. It demanded nothing more than the exquisite fun of scaring John and getting him wild with rage. That enjoyment achieved, Danny would cheerfully have gone a long way, if necessary, for help to rescue him. But in the midst of his mischief, he conceived the idea for a sprightly variation upon it ; nothing less than putting his sister in his place, and diverting John’s wrathful objurgations to her innocent head, to the mutual confusion of the pair. So



he ran to her, and with a good simulation of excited horror cried :

“ Oh, Hetty ! John Cameron has fallen over the edge of the cliff ! ”

“ John Cameron ? ” exclaimed the girl, hoarsely, turning very pale and catching the boy's shoulder to support herself. “ Are you sure ? ”

“ Yes ; if you crawl to the edge and look over you may see him on a rock a good ways down. ”

Hetty with difficulty repressed a feminine desire to shriek. She was trembling, and her teeth chattered as if with cold.

“ Where is he ? Show me ! ” she gasped.

“ Just beyond that little red oak. Watch where I pitch this stone. There ! ”

She watched the flight of the little stone, marking where it dropped just beyond the edge of the hill, and did not notice how Danny, behind her, hugged himself and grinned in enjoyment of the reflection that, small as the missile was, it would be certain to keep John lively.

“ You can find him, easy. I'm going for help, ” and the lad was off like a shot.

Hetty stood hesitating, wishing to go forward, yet so filled with dread and horror that her limbs seemed to weaken and become powerless to obey her will. Of all the men in the world, must it be John Cameron to whom this dreadful thing should happen ! John Cameron, so strong and handsome ! John Cameron, who would never know now how she would grieve for him !



How willingly she would have offered herself to fate in his stead ! Her great brown eyes, wide staring in anticipation of the horror they were to see, had no tears in them, for her tears were in her heart, swelling it to bursting, but a low moan that ended in a sob welled from her lips. Near the brink of the abyss, she dropped upon her hands and knees, and crawled forward to look over the edge.

John Cameron's keen hearing caught the rustling of her movements among the leaves, and naturally supposing the sound made by his tormentor, preliminary to another bombardment, hastily aimed at the stone in the tree and fired, exclaiming as he did so :

“ There ! Gol dern you ! ”

A woman's shriek answered the report of his rifle. Then succeeded silence—only silence.

He stood as if petrified by astonishment, holding his breath to listen, while gradually a white horror overspread his face. The voice was surely a woman's. He huskily shouted :

“ Hello, up there ! Are you hurt ? ”

There was no answer, not a sound of any kind but the violent beating of his own heart. The suspense quickly became unbearable. At one end of the ledge upon which he was perched grew a large tree, rooted among the rocks, but so insecurely, as it appeared, that its own weight threatened to tear it loose and precipitate it into the valley. Its upper branches were on a



level with the hill-top, but several yards away from the cliff, owing to the angle at which the trunk projected. Under ordinary circumstances, John would as soon have thought of jumping down to the creek as of climbing that tree, for the enormous leverage of his weight, among those upper branches, might very well prove too much for its scant hold upon the earth to bear. But in his present state of anxious excitement, approaching desperation, he did not even think twice of the danger. He recognized it, but that was all. Up the trunk he went, almost as nimbly as a squirrel could, feeling it quiver and crack, but caring nothing for those danger-signals, so long as he might reach a point high enough to see what his bullet had done. His climbing was necessarily done with his back toward the cliff. When he felt that he had attained a sufficient altitude, he stopped; but then a sudden dread of what he was about to see suddenly so overpowered him that for a minute he could not nerve himself to turn his head and look. At length he did so, and almost fell from his perch. His worst fears were realized. Face downward among the leaves, lay the body of a woman motionless—scant doubt, dead—killed by his bullet. Who she was, he could not tell; but that did not matter. His deed was a murder, anyway; and he felt that the best thing he could do would be to let go all holds and drop. Better do that than be hanged.





## CHAPTER III.

### AN AMAZON AND AN AXE.

But before John could quite make up his mind to that conclusive action, a thrill of hope ran through him. He fancied that he saw his victim move one of her hands. The motion was so slight that he could not, at first, be sure his strained sight had not played him a trick. Soon, however, it was beyond question. Her long, white fingers that had been outspread, closed slowly, clutching a handful of leaves. He prayed, raved and shouted to her to "wake up," but though he was near enough to hear the faint rustling of the dry leaves stirred by her hand, she was deaf to all the sounds he could make. He would have given years of his life to be able to get to where she was and try to revive her, but that would have been no less practicable, had she been upon another planet, instead of stretched out almost beneath his nose.

The period of the girl's unconsciousness seemed interminable to him; for, while it lasted,



more vivid emotions ran riot through his perturbed mind than in all his life before he had experienced, but in reality its duration was only a few moments. Eventually he saw her shiver, draw herself together and sit up, looking about with a dazed expression. There was blood on her neck and breast, but she did not notice it.

“Hetty Mulveil!” he gasped, in blank amazement. “Who would ’a’ thought she ’d have been up to such deviltries? I ’d ’a’ sworn it was Danny.”

It had not escaped John’s observant eye—which had often rested upon her with pleasure at church, singing-school and other public gatherings—that Hetty was a very pretty girl, but never had she seemed to him so superlatively beautiful as now. The temporary paleness, consequent upon her swoon, seemed to accentuate the lines of her lovely features; her great mass of wavy, chestnut-brown hair fell loosely upon her shoulders; and her involuntary gesture, placing both her hands to her temples, made a most effective pose for exhibition of the graceful modeling of her perfect form. What an unspeakable horror to him now was the thought that his rash act had come near to cutting short the life of one that had suddenly become dear to him.

“Hetty!” he cried, “are you much hurt? Speak to me! Tell me! Great gosh! I’m gettin’ wild away over here, where I can’t half tell you how sorry I am!”



She looked at him with a smile, as the color came back to her cheeks, and replied :

“ Hurt? No. I'm not hurt. What are you sorry for?”

“ For shootin' you.”

“ Shootin' me? Why, no.”

“ I tell you, yes. Can't I see the blood on your neck? But I didn't mean to—Lord knows I never thought it was you!”

She started, when he spoke of blood on her neck, put up her hand, and finding that he said truly, had no little difficulty to keep from fainting a second time. But her nerve was good, and after feeling gently with her finger tips for the wound, she forced a light laugh, as she replied :

“ Pshaw! That's nothing. Just a little chip off the end of my ear and a teeny skelp off the side of my neck.”

“ My God!” thought John, with a thrill of horror. “ An inch to the right would have sent the bullet through her head. Only blind chance saved her.

“ I didn't really mean to shoot at you, Miss Mulveil,” he said, in a tone of very earnest apology, “ because, you see, I didn't know it was you. I thought it was that limb of Satan, Danny, who had been heaving rocks down at me, and I just wanted to drive him off.”

“ Indeed, I don't wonder at it,” answered Hetty, sympathetically, “ for a more provoking boy don't walk the earth. Many's the time I've



told him something would happen to him, if a judgment didn't overtake him first. But he has gone to get help for you now, and that's something in his favor."

"I don't know," responded John, doubtfully. "He may not come back in a week."

"Well, I guess we needn't wait for him. If this hickory were to be felled, with the fork into that tree you're on, couldn't you climb up?"

"Sure. But who's to fell the hickory?"

"I am. I've got a good, sharp axe here, and I can chop as well as any man on Raccoon Creek. Get down where you'll be safe, and see how soon I'll have this tree cut."

"I'll climb down soon enough, but I want to stay here as long as I can."

"What for?"

"To look at you."

"You just want to laugh at my chopping."

"Indeed, I don't. I just can't any more get enough of seeing you. That's what is the fact."

Hetty's cheeks burned, but her eyes sparkled with pleasure. Affecting to laugh, she turned away, picked up the axe and set to work on the doomed tree.

John admiringly watched, while the chips flew from beneath her vigorous strokes, until the hickory was half felled. Then, before descending out of the way, he said, heartily:

"You do handle an axe as well as I could myself."



With what pleasure Hetty heard that commendation of her ability ! She had been told the same thing often before ; but what, to her, were the praises of others compared with John's approval ? When the tree was cut almost through, she set her shoulder against the trunk, like a thorough woodman, and threw it in exactly the position desired, with a nice precision that could not have been surpassed. Hardly had the crash of its fall and the rattle of breaking boughs among the now commingled tops died away when John was nimbly making his way to her side, which he quickly reached in safety.

"I can't tell you how much obliged I am," she said, hesitatingly.

Strangely enough, the nearer he came to her, the more awkward he felt. He could not speak as freely as he had from his perch in the tree-top ; could hardly, indeed, venture to look squarely into her beautiful, big blue eyes.

And she too seemed to have an access of bashfulness.

"You are quite welcome," she said, almost coldly, and was secretly angry with herself for using such a tone to him.

Her exertion had left her still panting and flushed, so that fluent immediate speech could hardly have been expected from her, but there was no reason, she said to herself, why she should "act mean to John." She wondered if he would understand that it was not at all in her



heart to do so. Then she was afraid that he would. It certainly is very hard for an inexperienced girl to know just how far it is proper or prudent to betray her real feelings or restrain them from betraying themselves. And John was so handsome. He was larger than she had thought him, too. Often as she had feasted her eyes upon him in public, she had never been so close to him as now ; and it was a little pleasurable surprise to her to find that, tall as was her Diana-like figure, he towered more than a head above her—yes, more than head and neck, she believed. Some day she would determine that difference more accurately. And what a noble head it was to which she looked up ; with its wealth of golden-brown hair and shot-cropped, curling beard ; honest brown eyes ; broad brow ; firm, red mouth and clear complexion.

With a soft piece of muslin he had in the patch box of his rifle, he insisted upon bandaging her slightly “chipped” ear and “skelped” neck, to keep the cold from the wounds. It was perhaps not a very necessary operation, as the blood had long since ceased flowing, but she did not object to it. She colored and his fingers trembled, but they were both careful about having the job properly done and did not hurry it.

“It was very lucky for me that you happened to come along,” he said, “and a chance that I suppose mightn’t happen again for a great while.”



"I don't know when I 've been up on the 'Backbone' before. Not for a year I guess. But I went over to see Mrs. Davis and took Danny along to get an axe sharpened on their grindstone. Ours is broken down. That was how I happened to have the axe with me. I don't usually travel around with one over my shoulder."

Together they walked down the slope at the end of the hill, into the valley, where their respective roads soon diverged. He would have liked to walk on and on indefinitely with her, but did not venture to suggest doing so, particularly as she was the first to stop at the fork of the road, as if expecting him to leave her there.

"I—I would like to come over and see that you get well, Miss Mulveil," he stammered.

"Why, I should be pleased to see you any time, Mr. Cameron," she replied, formally.

"Then, if you wouldn't mind, I think I'll come over some evening pretty soon."

"Whenever you please, Mr. Cameron."

"And you don't really have any hard feelings toward me for shooting you?"

"Oh, no, indeed, I don't, Mr. Cameron; not a bit. Why, don't I know you wouldn't do it a purpose?"

"The Lord knows I wouldn't, Hetty!" he exclaimed, fervently. "I'd rather shoot myself!"



“Don’t think about it any more.”

They said “good night,” for the shades of evening had by this time fallen heavily, and parted. As the girl walked swiftly away homeward, the music of his voice, in the utterance of her name, rang in her ears, and, closing her eyes, she could see him again just as he looked when he said it. And he, looking after her, admiring her trim, shapely figure and the graceful firmness of her carriage until it faded from his sight in the deepening dusk, said, vigorously, to himself :

“Thunder ! What a fool I’ve been, never to have noticed before how awfully derved pretty Hetty Mulveil is ! Why, there isn’t a girl in Washington County that is fit to hold a candle to her !”







## CHAPTER IV.

### DEVILTRY SURPASSING ALL OTHER DEVILTRY.

When Danny Mulveil disappeared from the crest of the Devil's Backbone, he did not go for help. He had not even an intention of doing so. True, he had told Hetty he would, but the relations between Danny and truth were always strained. It had not yet occurred to his mind that truth might, now and then, infuse a new element of excitement into existence. If he had recognized truth as something explosive and dangerous, of which many persons are much afraid, he would certainly have been tempted to tamper with it sometimes.

Strolling contentedly down the slope and into the valley, thinking no more of John Cameron's predicament and the possibly embarrassing responsibility he had shifted upon his sister, he found nature, as usual, prolific of material for the amusement of his earnest, boyish nature. He stoned a chipmunk and a bird, "heaved a rock" into a deep pool of the creek to terrify a school



of fish, met a neighbor's dog in the lane and made friends long enough to enable him to treacherously fasten a bunch of thorns to the animal's tail, sprang upon the back of a cow in the pasture and rode her at a gallop until she threw him off and went lumbering across the meadow half mad with fright, tied two stout wisps of grass across the spring-house path to trip up anybody who went for milk; and so, flitting from one innocent pleasure to another, marking his progress by devices for embittering the existence of all living things that came within the range of his influence, he reached home.

A muscovy drake, flanked by his harem, stood near the kitchen-door and viewed him with the haughty disdain serious natures feel for the frivolous. Suddenly that proud, slow-moving bird found himself caught up by Danny and his short tail clamped fast in the cleft of a fire-log that had been partly split and held open by the axe driven into its end. The outrage had been perpetrated before he had time to utter one quack of indignant remonstrance; but when he realized his helpless plight, his dignity gave way and he filled the air with vociferations of alarm, in which his amazed and sympathetic wives joined loudly. Mrs. Mulveil, hearing the disturbance, rushed out of the kitchen to learn its cause, and her remarks were quite in harmony with those of the ducks. She quickly liberated the drake and made a futile effort to catch



Danny, who easily eluded her clutch and fled to the top of the big wood-pile, his customary place of refuge. Having reached there, he was always willing to condone, overlook and forget any of his offenses, and seemed to feel that others should demonstrate a like spirit. The supercilious bird eyed his tormentor with lofty scorn, when set free, and seemed comforted by Mrs. Mulveil's threats that Danny should be "skinned alive" if he ever did such a thing again.

"Where's Hetty?" demanded the old woman.

"Up on the 'Backbone' with John Cameron," answered the lad.

"With who?"

"John Cameron."

"What in the name of the prophets is she a-doin' with John Cameron?"

"Dunno. Talkin', I s'pose. Gals mostly is."

"Well! Did anybody ever hear the like! Hetty Mulveil takin' up with a Cameron! It's enough to make her father turn over in his grave. Maybe she won't hear from me when she comes home. John Cameron, indeed! How did she come to meet him there?"

"He waited until she came along, I guess," replied Danny, with a grin.

"I'll be bound she had sent him word, somehow, that she had laid out to go over to Mrs. Davis's to-day. You set to work and cut some kindlings and get in the coal for the night, if you don't want a hiding."



When his mother had re-entered the kitchen, still grumbling and muttering about Hetty and John Cameron, Danny came down off the wood-pile. By way of protest against his task, he shied a heavy chip at a hen just going to roost in an apple-tree near at hand, and so true was his aim, that he knocked her fluttering and squawking from her perch. While he was still enjoying her consternation, his mother reappeared with a milk-pail in her hand, and started down the path toward the spring-house. Danny watched her progress with delighted expectancy. Suddenly he saw her plunge forward, flourish her arms wildly, shying the pail in the air over her head, and go down in a heap, emitting a whoop of surprise and alarm. The knotted grass had done its work well, and the measure of Danny's happiness, for that day, was full.

Night had fallen by the time Hetty reached her home. Danny was shoveling up his last load of coal and did not hear her coming until she was close beside him. When he was aware of her presence, he bounded beyond her reach and held himself in readiness to mount the wood-pile at her first demonstration of hostility. But, to his bewilderment and disappointment, she did not evince any resentment for the trick he had played her. She even looked happy, and it was with a gentle reproach only in her voice, that she said to him :



"Why, Danny! I thought you said you were going to get help for Mr. Cameron?"

"*Mister* Cameron!" echoed the boy, with affected surprise. "Who's he?"

"Well, John Cameron—Jack Cameron, if you haven't got sense enough to understand proper speaking of a gentleman," snapped Hetty, impatiently.

"Oho! It's Jack, now, is it? Our Jack! My Jack! Dear Jack!" pursued the mischievous urchin, with a precocious talent for burlesque, infusing a ridiculously exaggerated tone of affection into his voice and manner.

"I declare, Danny, I do think you are the most provoking limb of meanness that ever lived!" exclaimed Hetty, making a rush at him.

But in two bounds he was on the wood-pile beyond her reach, where he continued:

"Oh, Jack! Dear Jack! Darling Jack! Jacky!" until Hetty turned her back upon him and went into the kitchen.

Mrs. Mulveil was busy getting supper ready. Near the fire, a neatly dressed young woman, thin, but pretty, and with a sad, sweet face, sat warming her hands.

"Oh, good evening, Mary! I am so glad you have come!" exclaimed Hetty, at sight of her, embracing her affectionately.

"Not more so than I am," responded the young woman. "I could not get away before.



Every one wants winter things made at once now, you know."

"Well, we've got you now and will not let you go again for a good while; make up your mind to that."

"And you'll stay home and help her," broke in the old woman, "instead of gallivanting on the Devil's Backbone with John Cameron; so make up your mind to that."

"Why, mother, I haven't been gallivanting."

"Don't tell me! Wasn't John Cameron waiting for you up there? Didn't Danny get tired and come away, leaving you two together? Of all the men in the world, it must be John Cameron you go out in the woods to meet! I should think you might have more pride about you—and you a Mulveil. You know very well there never yet was any love lost between the Mulveils and the Camerons, even among our forbears in the old country. The Camerons, indeed! A stuck-up lot, who think themselves better than anybody else, because they have a clan; while, as is well known among wise men, the first Mulveil was a king—and an Irish king; and I'd like to have anybody show me a Cameron that ever was a king. I wonder if you've forgot how John Cameron's father got the best of yours in that lawsuit, when we had to pay one hundred dollars for our bull jabbing his horn into old Cameron's mare; and it never did seem sense nor reason nor justice nor godliness to me that



we should be held responsible for the natural dispositions of the dumb beasts."

"Don't cook fish till you catch them, mother," answered Hetty, placidly. "You've been swallowing some of Danny's yarns. I should think by this time you'd know better than to believe anything that boy says, except that he's hungry or don't want to wash himself."

"Wasn't it true that you and John Cameron had a meetin' up on the 'Backbone' to-day? Wasn't he waiting there for you to come along?"

"He was waiting, certainly, but hardly as a matter of his own choice, I think, or for me," replied the girl, with a little laugh.

And then she went on to narrate the facts of Jack's mishaps and her share in his rescue, without remembering, however, anything about the shooting, all traces of which she had, on her way home, taken care to hide from casual observation. While she was telling the story, her mother and Mary Elder kept up a running commentary of exclamations:

"Law's sakes!"

"Did you ever!"

"If that don't beat all!"

Danny, being hungry, had better use for his mouth than talking with it, but by the knowing grins and leers with which he favored Hetty, he sorely tempted her to box his ears.

The girl's vivid recital of John Cameron's peril quite won her mother's sympathetic inter-



est, for Mrs. Mulveil was at heart a kind, well-meaning woman, wishing ill to none, even to a Cameron, so long as the old faction grudge did not happen to be stirred up. But the story had a keener interest for Mary Elder, who, being a clear-sighted girl, saw what the widow did not perceive, or even suspect.

Soon after supper, Danny—in his customary state of rebellion and angry disgust with the familiar assurance that it would be hard enough to get him up in the morning, even if he went now, was driven off to his bed in the loft.

Then the three women abandoned themselves to the ecstatic delight of an untrammelled conversational revel over the subject of dress. Mary Elder was a skillful dressmaker, who made, or, at least, cut and fitted, the best gowns of half the well-to-do women in that part of the country. The whole year round she was in demand and sure of enthusiastic welcome at any one of fifty farm-houses. All the latest fashions known in Pittsburg she could be depended upon for supplying, and she was a treasure-house of knowledge concerning all the new things the most stylish women in the county had or contemplated having. And she was prudent withal. Every wardrobe or individual garment reported by her was presented in its best light. A thing “turned” or “made over” to look like new, from her point of view, was new. She betrayed no secrets. It was not necessary that she should do



so to make her news interesting or establish her position as an authority.

At length, Mrs. Mulveil, having yawned until her jaws cracked, declared she could sit up no longer, and went off to bed. Hetty "covered" the big fire in the grate by piling upon it a large quantity of the finely broken coal called "slack," which melts into a crust during the night, and at the first touch of the matutinal early poker bursts into a mass of roaring flame. Then she and Mary sat down together before the fireplace, in the half-light cast from between the lower bars of the grate, and, with their arms about each other, talked in low tones.

"You told me something you did not tell your mother, dear," said Mary, drawing her younger friend close to her.

"Why, no! How so? What?"

"That you were in love with John Cameron."

"Why, Mary! How you do talk!"

"Oh, don't try to deny it to me, dear. I'm enough older than you to read the signs. You can't help telling your love or letting it tell itself. Your voice would make it known if you were only talking about the weather; and if you are silent, your happy eyes will laugh it out to the world; and if you shut them tight, the flame in your cheeks will tell the story, as it does now."

"That is only the red firelight."



“God grant the fire that light comes from may never die down in ashes.”

“Oh, Mary! How you say that?”

“I have reason to, for I know better than you do yet what love is; how happy or how wretched one may be made by it.”

Hetty shuddered, and for a few minutes both were silent, looking at the fire, one seeing in it the past, the other the future.

On the surface of the melting mass of rich bituminous coal near the front—where it was thinnest piled and most readily acted upon by the fierce heat beneath—glossy, jet-black gas bubbles formed continuously, slowly swelling larger and larger each in its turn suddenly bursting into a bright but generally only momentary blaze. Sometimes the flame would catch the gas rising in slender columns of dark smoke from where the “slack” lay thickest, and for an instant produce an effect like a diminutive display of “heat lightning.” Again it would persist for a longer time, as much as a minute or two, in a long, slender, tongue of hissing, golden light. No two bubbles acted exactly alike, either in formation or transformation. And a pretty picture those fitful illuminations made of the homely but cheerful kitchen interior, every detail of which was brought out by them in most vivid relief. The bright utensils of tin and copper shone like burnished silver and gold; the old dark oak table took on a mahogany color; the full moon-face



on the dial of the old-fashioned tall clock assumed an expression of intelligent consciousness; weird shadows danced among strings of brilliant scarlet peppers pendant from the ceiling; and even the blue mandarin, with his blue suite, crossing a blue bridge from a blue forest to a blue pagoda, on the great dishes exposed upon the shelves, was brought out clearly *en evidence* and looked pretty rather than preposterous. But these were not the sights that Hetty and Mary saw. The fire elementals' magic wrought other pictures for them. At length the seamstress resumed, speaking in a low, sad voice, hardly louder than a murmur in a minor key:

“You don't know how much older than you I am dear, both in years and in sorrow. Maybe I do not look my age. They say that those who don't care do not grow old so fast as those who do, and I guess that must be so. I don't care. I have nothing left to care for. But I have had my romance, and buried it before you were put into long frocks. It was in Pittsburg, where I went when I was only a slip of a girl to learn dressmaking, and where I lived as you know, a good many years. Well, I was engaged to be married there to a young man named Grant Guthrie. He was a machinist, and I can't tell you how handsome and good he was and how dear to me. And he loved me, too. Yes, I am sure he did—in a man's way, though. He was all I thought of or cared for, and, having him, I



would not have been conscious that I desired anything else. But, besides me, he loved glory and his country, and he had ambition to make a name for himself and fortune ; so nothing would do for him but he must enlist in the army and go away to Mexico."

She stopped speaking for a few minutes. When she went on again, her voice trembled, and a sudden flare of fire-light showed that tears were standing in her eyes. She continued :

"He was going to become a colonel, perhaps a general. Then he would return home a hero, marry me and go to Congress and be a great man. The one thing he never thought of was that he might not live to come back—and he never did ! He was shot down by the Mexicans in one of the first battles, and only lived long enough to give a comrade his dying message to me ; and he is buried far away in a land I shall never see."

Her voice broke, and she wept without an effort at constraint. Hetty embraced her, kissed her brow, patted her shoulder as one soothes a sorrowing child, and murmured, caressingly :

"There, there, dear ! Don't take on so, don't ! Maybe it is all for the best."

"Yes," sobbed Mary, doubtfully ; "that is what the minister says—that 'all is for the best'—but I can hardly make up my mind that he is right."



"And don't you believe there will ever come a time when you will be with him again?"

"Not in this world, anyway; and this is all we really know anything about."

"But I think I should try to hope so, if I were you."

"So I do; so I do. But, oh, it is so hard to believe in the light of another world that sends no ray into the gloom of this! There, there! Don't let us talk any more about my old story. Bury it in your heart, as I do in mine; only, if you ever recall it, let it be to warn you not to hope for too much happiness from love. And now, dear, tell me about yourself. Does John love you?"

"Oh, he has never said a word of love to me. Indeed, we hardly ever spoke before to-day. I suppose that miserable old quarrel between the Camerons and the Mulveils kept him from seeing me."

"But not you from seeing him?"

"N-no. I looked at him sometimes; enough to know him by sight, anyway."

Mary smiled at the *naïveté* of the admission.

"But, now that he has seen you, how does he look at you? As if he loved you?"

"I hardly know," answered Hetty, with a little embarrassed laugh. "You see, I have no experience to judge by; but I—I—think—yes."

"Then I guess he does. The heart does not need experience to read that look. It is true



that some men can lie with their eyes, as others can with their tongues, but I do not think John Cameron is one of that sort. No, he is of good, honest, manly stock. And I can speak impartially about that, for, you know, my family is mixed up with both the Camerons and the Mulveils."

"But more to the Camerons. You would take up for them first."

"Why! You savage little partisan! I believe you are disposed to find fault with me for speaking well of a Cameron!"

"Oh, no, no, indeed! I am for one Cameron against the world."







## CHAPTER V.

### DANNY WAGES PARTHIAN WARFARE WITH THE DOMINIE.

The tax for keeping the public roads in repair was, in those days, payable either in money or labor, and the latter method was generally preferred in the agricultural districts. This fact was however by no means attributable to inability of the farmers to pay cash, or because they had a prejudice against parting with their silver. "Road-tax Days" had come to be popularly regarded as exciting events. They brought neighbors together on week-days, when political discussions, exchanges of rumors supposed to be news, good-natured personal banter and occasional horse trades could be indulged in with propriety. The legal hours of labor were "from sun-up to sun-down."

It was only about a fortnight after John Cameron's adventure on the "Backbone" that "Road-tax Day" came around in the township of Elder, and called forth, as usual, the entire able-bodied male population. By daybreak, they commenced arriving at the great white-oak, on the township



line, which was the rendezvous appointed by the road-master. A sort of tacit understanding, born of habit, prevailed, as to the implements and tools each man should bring to the work, so that all were amply provided with axes, shovels, pick-axes, cant-hooks, hand-spikes and hoes. Some came with teams and ploughs or bob-sleds, to run drainage furrows at the sides of the road or drag heavy weights.

The first-comers assumed the right to banter later arrivals upon their tardiness, and many a sharply rude jest was good-naturedly taken and replied to by a keen rejoinder, until, finally, the last comer, a young fellow who had but recently been married, was made the subject for so lively a general attack as overwhelmed him and made him sullen for a time, his wit being no match for the assembled township. With few exceptions, the people in that part of Washington County then were of Scotch-Irish extraction, and their humor was of the dry, biting, sly sort peculiar to that breed of jokers; keenly effective as uttered, but almost impossible of even approximately fair reproduction in cold type. Words of innocently simple purport were converted into barbed and envenomed darts of meaning by an arch look, a suggestive intonation or, oftener yet, by their covert allusion to some purely personal matter which had become popular knowledge.

Soon all were busy at work. The echoes



were stirred by the ringing sounds of axe-strokes and the shouts of the drivers to their horses. Young squirrels, high up in the oak and hickory-trees, yelped inquiries to their elders as to what they thought of the strange proceedings going on away-below ; and the wise ones barked back that, strange as it was true, no present harm to the squirrel race was threatened. Inquisitive crows, having thoroughly satisfied themselves, by sharp observation from a safe distance, that there were no guns near at hand, came impudently close, perched over the merrymakers' heads and cawed down their criticisms upon what was going on. The horde of dogs accompanying their masters, having formally opened the ceremonies, in conformity with ancient custom, with a promiscuous free fight, came to an amicable understanding with one another, and, joining forces in pursuit of minks, rabbits and chipmunks, made the forest ring with their hunting choruses.

At noon the men suspended their work, and the dogs temporarily abandoned their bootless hunting. Each man had brought his dinner with him, and in a sunny spot, well sheltered from the wind, they all sat down near together to eat and chat. The *entente cordiale* among the dogs was violently ruptured in their eager rivalry for the first bones thrown them, but reëstablished upon their general recognition that their masters were leaving to them much more food than they could



devour. After quickly finishing their meal, the younger men, to kill time during the remaining portion of the dinner-hour, entered into a series of competitive contests of strength and skill, "putting" a heavy stone, "tossing the caber," jumping and throwing stones at a mark. In each of these exercises the competitors gradually but surely dropped out until but two were left, John Cameron and Rufus Goldie, between whom there was a strong feeling of rivalry that spurred them to efforts far beyond those of their fellows. It was not simply personal but rather the concentration to two focal points of the antagonism long existent between those opposing factions, the Camerons and the Mulveils. By insensible degrees, from the time Rufus came to live in this neighborhood, he and John had grown into prominence as the very nearly matched champions of the young men who, according to traditional duty, were keeping alive the ancient grudge of their ancestors. Yet Rufus was not exactly a Mulveil but only "related to them." His connection was admittedly no closer than that his mother's first husband, who was a Beaseley—she being a McBride—had a brother married to a girl whose half-brother took one of the Baker girls to wife, and everybody knew that the Bakers were related to the Mulveils from "away back," though few could tell exactly how. That was the way in which most of the old women figured out his "distant cousinship,"



though there were some who claimed to have found connection in another way, through the Clancys--a claim against which much could have been, and was, said, without reaching any certitude. At all events, he was recognized as a relative and welcomed as an adherent of the Mulveils. But he was a "ne'er-do-well," working pretty faithfully at Sim Mulveil's saw-mill or on his farm, but never, somehow, accumulating anything for himself, not even acquiring possession of a saddle-horse. It was whispered that he gambled. Of course, he was expected to have vices, for it was well known that he worked in Pittsburg several months before coming out to Washington County to live, five years ago, and the contamination of city life was beyond question. Every one had to admit, however, that he was a good-looking young fellow, lacking in the open frankness of countenance that characterized John Cameron, but with a fine athletic figure, regular features and a handsome head of straight hair black as coal.

Each of Goldie's feats in the athletic contest was loudly applauded by the Mulveils, and each time he was defeated by John, the Camerons shouted for joy and triumph over their neighbors. From these indicative manifestations of feeling, progress was easy to the utterance of taunts and insinuated threats.

Several of the older men present, mindful of the promises given two years before by the



recognized heads of the factions, when Squire McCalmont brought about a formal agreement of peace between them, interfered to prevent the fight that seemed imminent—and for which abundant precedent had been established on other “Road-tax Days.” Their endeavors, at least, caused the hot-headed youngsters to hesitate, and fortunately an incident occurred which diverted their attention and averted the threatened danger, by restoring general good-humor.

Danny Mulveil and the mail-rider suddenly came dashing down the road, riding furiously and howling like Comanches. “The imp,” whose saddle was simply a sheepskin, was mounted upon a bright bay two-year-old with a blazed face, that everybody recognized at a glance as the property of minister McLeod. The mail-rider—a boy only two or three years older than Danny—rode a good horse, with which he had, in a succession of semi-weekly races, repeatedly beaten every animal in the Mulveil stables—or, at least, those to which the imp had access. But Danny, who was not the sort of boy who could be ever so effectually downed that he would stay downed, had to-day stolen from the pasture the minister’s blooded colt, the joy of that good man’s heart and the pride of his life, and was determined to “ride him for all there is in him.”

Both lads were wild with excitement, yelling



like maniacs and lashing the flanks of the spirited steeds that with straining muscles, distended nostrils and protruding eyes, were going at their swiftest speed, when they plunged among the wrangling road-makers and, like a flash, were gone again, around a bend in the highway, and out of sight. Brief as the glimpse afforded had been, and troubled by the scramble to get out of the way of those flying hoofs, all the men had seen that Danny was rapidly gaining upon his antagonist, actually leaving him almost as if the mail-rider had been mounted upon a cow, and they joined in a shout, for somehow the outcome of the race suddenly assumed the proportions of a local triumph.

While their hurrahs were still in the air, a third rider appeared upon the scene, the Rev. Mr. McLeod himself, bare-headed, in his shirt-sleeves, red with anger, riding as furiously as the boys, and shouting denunciations and threats after them—not with any hope of their hearing him, but as a relief to his mind. Whip and shout as he would, he was losing ground steadily, for the animal he bestrode was a sturdy, sedate farm-horse, that had never, probably, indulged voluntarily in a gallop since he was a colt. Without seeming to notice his friends and neighbors as he dashed through the space cleared by the racers, he, too, disappeared around the bend in the road; but long after he was out of sight they could hear his shouts and



the dull echoes of the farm-horse's hoof-beats thundering across a little wooden bridge spanning the creek.

Half an hour elapsed before the reverend gentleman came slowly jogging back, leading the foam-flecked and panting colt. He was still enraged. Danny has escaped his vengeance. The quick-witted imp, having ignominiously defeated the mail-rider, had taken no chances on returning the colt to its pasture, but had tied it at the roadside and vanished in the woods. He probably did not even know that he was pursued, but just acted upon the intuition that seldom failed to get him out safely from his innumerable "scrapes."

"If ever there was a boy foreordained to be a torment to his fellow-creatures," said the Rev. Mr. McLeod, "that Danny Mulveil is one! I'm sure I can see for his future anything but a happy or creditable career, and if he comes to the gallows I shall not be surprised."

"You didn't even get to see the race, did you?" asked one of the men, in a tone of sympathy and with a twinkle in his eye.

"See the race! I only wish I had—close enough to have got hold of that boy!"

"If you ever think of putting the colt on the turf, Danny would be about as good a jockey as you could get. I tell you, he knows how to ride. He went by here in grand shape."

The indignant clergyman looked at the speaker



for a moment in disgusted silence, and, without trusting himself to reply, rode away.

There were a good many chuckles and quiet jests behind his back, for Danny, having won the race, had come in for a large share of the popular sympathy, and the incident served to put in good humor everybody except the rival athletes, whose feeling was not simply factional but personal.

"We'll have more chance another time to find out who is the better man between us," said Rufus, menacingly, in a low tone, passing near to John.

"You'll never find me unready," replied the latter with an air of indifference that bordered upon insolence. "A Cameron never turned his back on a Mulveil, or anything that wore a Mulveil collar."

The angry retort on Goldie's lips was silenced by the authoritative interposition of one of the old men, a Mulveil, who, forcibly taking him by the arm, led him aside and hissed in his ear:

"Can't ye bide yer time, ye fule? Don't you see they're nearly two to our one here to-day?"





## CHAPTER VI.

### A VILLAGE MILTON.

The Elder-township school-house, a rude, roomy log structure, surrounded by large maple-trees, stood at the forest's edge, on one of the hill-slopes swelling gently up from the Raccoon Creek Valley, opposite the Devil's Backbone. That location had been selected for it, simply because it was central and consequently equally convenient for the twenty-five or thirty scholars who came to it from all directions. But the choice had been a most fortunate one, since it had far more to do than the school-board ever imagined with getting and keeping there a model schoolmaster. Mr. Clinton V. Parsons, the master in question, was "a singular man," in the eyes of the entire community. Nobody ever heard him avow a like or a dislike, or even express a preference. He was indifferent to everything, placid under all circumstances, interested in nothing, notwithstanding such scrupulous fidelity in the discharge of his duties as might only have been naturally expected from one mastered by an enthusiasm or having an



ambition to serve. An impression prevailed in the minds of those who knew him that he "just loved the mountain." So he did.

He had all the furniture of the school-room shifted about, so that at his desk he commanded a view of that majestic rocky countenance and could admire the various masks it assumed. Sometimes, when the scholars had gone home, he would sit on the doorstep, smoking his pipe and gazing at the cliff, watching its beauties glow in the strong light of the setting sun and fade as darkness fell. And in the mornings he was often seated there at dawn, hours before school-time, surely for no other purpose than to see the sun rise beyond the great hill, first as a roseate softness in the gray of the eastern sky, next as an auriferous glory resting upon the summit, while the vast mass in shadow beneath frowned darkly. Still, he was never betrayed into saying that he liked it.

Three springs the master had seen the bourgeoning of the shrubs and trees that masked the stupendous wall of rock, and this was the fourth year in which he had beheld them assume their brief autumnal splendors. Still, the ever-changing yet never-lost loveliness of the prospect continued to fascinate him. He could have got a larger salary in either of three adjoining townships than he was paid here, for his fame as an educator and trainer, particularly in competitive orthography, was widespread. But, year after



year, he came around for the school season in Elder township, and nobody could think of any other possible attraction for him than the Devil's Backbone. There were, each season, three or four, at least, and sometimes seven or eight, big girls in attendance at the school—girls old enough to be married; handsome, rosy-cheeked, red-lipped, bright-eyed, large-limbed girls, upon whom few bachelors could have gazed without interest. But Mr. Parsons, as they themselves said, minded them no more than if they were bumps on a log. Certainly he was "a singular man," and he looked it. His eyes were large and very black, his complexion a dead white and his hair long, straight and black as his eyes. In repose, his face would have been pronounced by the casual observer, absolutely expressionless, but a careful physiognomist would have read in it stern, never-relaxing self-suppression. Was there fire under that mask of ice? Or had his will extinguished even the embers? That was his secret, and he kept it well.

It was not even known where he came from; where he went to during the summer; scarcely who he was. When asked about the first he replied:

"From Maine near the Texas line—" the second:

"When the Gulf of Mexico is frozen over, I go somewhere else—"

and the third:



"I have myself been all my life trying to find out."

Of course, the women set afloat a romantic rumor about him, and one of the brightest and most impudent girl asked him, bluntly :

"Is it true, Mr. Parsons, that you have been unhappy in love?"

"No," he replied, "I never married."

In his hours of leisure, when he was not contemplating the Devil's Backbone, he read Plato, which caused some of the elders to suspect him of heterodoxy. One of them, whose faith exceeded his knowledge, took it upon him to demand of the schoolmaster "what sort of a Christian" he was.

"A pessimist," replied Mr. Parsons.

"Oh! Ah! Is that anything like a Calvinist?"

"Exactly the same," was his languid assurance.

He never argued; it was not worth while. He never hunted or angled; as he had all the food he wanted without needing to kill anything. He never attended dances or went sleigh-riding; because he took no unnecessary exercise and had no reason for going anywhere. His existence seemed laid out altogether on negative lines. Nothing surprised, excited or ruffled him. Rarely he smiled, and his words were few. And, withal, he seemed to know things by intuition, in the strangest way.



For instance, Danny Mulveil—the day after his race on the minister's colt—blew up the school-house stove by means of a “loaded” block of coal. He had never done anything more cunningly in his life. Jimmy Dunbar—who carried in the block and put it where the master would himself be likely to throw it on the fire—was the only person who knew Danny had bored the hole, put in the powder and plugged it, and Jimmy certainly had not betrayed him. Yet Mr. Parsons did not so much as lift an eyebrow when the thing went off, and, while the stove-pipe was clattering down, the stove-lid tumbling across the room, the live coals scattering over the floor, and the air full of smoke, ashes and girls' screams, he said with perfect placidity :

“Danny Mulveil and James Dunbar will remain. The other scholars may go home.”

He asked no questions ; uttered no reproaches ; made no threats. He simply set the boys to work, repairing damages and cleansing the school-room, a punitive toil of sufficient difficulty to make them seriously regret their effort to have fun with him. While they worked, he looked on, smoking and in silence.

A dismal-looking, lean, little man, dressed in a rusty-black suit and a threadbare, long, blue cloak, came in and setting down a square, leathern portmanteau that seemed heavy, asked permission to warm himself at the fire. Laconically



but not unkindly, the master replied: "Certainly," and pushed toward him a stool, upon which he sank down, spreading his white, numb fingers close to the glowing stove.

"I 'm a colporteur, sir," he said, shyly.

Mr. Parson's nod seemed to reply that the fact was self-evident, though his lips did not move.

"I don't suppose I have any books you want?" resumed the little man, tentatively, after a short pause.

"I agree with you."

"I have a volume of very edifying sermons by that eminent divine, the Rev. Mr. Mucklebane—just issued."

"Pity."

"What is a pity?"

"That they have been issued."

"Oh! Ah! Yes. Well, between ourselves, this time I agree with you. The public does not take kindly to Mucklebane. I have lugged a half-dozen copies of him, for as many days—and he is very heavy—without selling a single one."

The speaker edged as close to the stove as he could and put his half-frozen feet upon its base. In a low, dreary monotone, he went on:

"No; nobody wants Mucklebane or much of anything I sell. And if my sales are not good, I starve, for my commissions are very small. Eleven miles I have trudged to-day and sold nothing. And yesterday it was the same, except that I sold one 'Crook in the Lot' for thirty



cents. A young man over on Robinson's Run would have taken a set of Doctor Dick if I had had him, but I was loaded up with Mucklebane and no Dick. Just my luck. Twenty miles from Pittsburg, a snowstorm coming on and a boxful of Mucklebane. Perhaps you would like 'The Two Sons of Oil,' by an eminent Pittsburg divine, sir."

"Perhaps I might, but I shall never know whether I would or not."

While replying, the schoolmaster took a silver dollar from his pocket and put it into the unhappy colporteur's hand.

"What is this for, sir?" the man asked, doubtfully.

"How should I know? Whatever you need most."

The poor fellow hesitated, the hand that held the money trembled, and a faint tinge of color showed in his cheeks, as he replied:

"But I—I can't accept charity."

"It is not charity but simply adjustment, in some degree, of accidentally unbalanced relations in life."

"I do not understand you."

"I happen to have, and you happen to need. In our common humanity your need constitutes a claim upon me, and my recognition of the justice of that claim is a duty, not a charity. I do not say that if you had not honestly tried to get along, even to the desperate extent of



endeavoring to force Mucklebane upon a re-  
jective world, your claim would be so good as it  
is, but in no case could I ignore it altogether."

"It is a strange doctrine. What sect teaches  
it?"

"All. Heathens practice it."

There were tears in the man's eyes, and his  
voice quavered, as he said:

"God knows I need it—bitterly need it.  
What misery I have known since trying to live  
by this wretched trade. It has driven me to  
that which—"

"Hello! You here already!" burst out a big  
voice at the door, as a huge man strode in amid  
a wild whirl of snow-flakes. He shook himself,  
and the snow tumbled off him in masses.

"I have been here since dismissing school. It  
was necessary for me to remain, to have repaired  
the disorder occasioned by some boyish mischief  
this afternoon."

"Danny's mischief, I'd bet?"

"Yes. When that was done, the threaten-  
ing storm made me think my pipe a sufficient  
supper."

"Too light a supper for me. I've got to  
have something to chew and swallow three  
times a day."

While talking, the big man perched upon the  
end of a desk, near the stove, where he looked  
even more enormous than he had at the door.  
In a reflective tone, he went on:



"I don't know what gets into that boy. I expect every day to have to arrest him for something that will send him to the penitentiary. The minister could come mighty nigh sending him there, if he wanted to, for malicious mischief, if not downright stealing."

The colporteur, who had visibly started at the word "arrest," stared fixedly at him, as if fascinated, but the big man went on speaking without noticing him :

"I'd hate to have to take up a cousin of mine, especially a boy ; but a constable has got to do his duty, and it looks as if nothing short of that will ever do Danny any good."

"I—I—think I'd best be going!" nervously exclaimed the little colporteur, who had risen and now stood apprehensively tugging his poor, thin cloak more tightly about him, as he looked at the whiteness of the window, where nothing could be seen but snow.

"You know best, I presume," answered Mr. Parsons.

Advice or direction which did not clearly fall within the lines of his duty as a schoolmaster he rarely, if ever, indulged in.

The large constable on the desk looked down indifferently at the book-vender, and did not seem to have anything to say to him until he was on his way to the door, but then asked, suddenly :

"Say ! Weren't you here about a month ago?"



"I—no—that is—yes, possibly. A month or two, I guess. I don't remember now the exact time."

"Thought I'd seen you."

Neither question nor comment was uttered with any specific purpose. Each was a mere idea that had floated up to the surface of his mind. But each seemed to hasten the departure of the colporteur, who quickly said: "Good day!" and stepped out, with his heavy load of Muckelbane, into the storm.

It was hardly day at all, and it certainly was not a good day. Night, of the ordinary sort, was not due for a good half-hour yet, but a gray night had already set in. The air was full of a niveous brightness, from the white, icy crystals that filled it. Light could not penetrate it more than a few yards in any direction steadily, but there were momentary glimpses afforded, through the wildly whirling mass of snow-flakes, of objects far away, that, so seen, loomed up in exaggerated proportions, with a weird effect of obvious unreality. The wind was violent and unceasing, blowing, as sailors say, "from all quarters at once," and the dry, sharp snow, dashed and swept by it in vast billows and swirls, stung like needle-points, the thin, white face of the little colporteur. A myriad of unseen hands seemed clutching his thin, flapping cloak and striving to drag it from his shoulders.

Stumbling, sliding, shielding his eyes as well



as he could and groaning beneath the weight of his load, which seemed to grow heavier at every moment, he shuffled along down the slope into the valley, now and then glancing furtively back over his shoulder. Until he had left the little grove of maples well behind him, the air above and around was full of tones, as if from a great æolian harp; but in the open valley, oppressive stillness, broken only by an occasional angry scream of the wind high overhead, surrounded him.

“A queer-looking, little Dick, that,” remarked big constable Sim Mulveil, when the door closed behind the book-vender; “and not overly well fixed to be out in an all-tarnation storm like this.”

“He is unfortunate.”

“Yes; and so are we. It’s consumedly unfortunate that this consarned snow-fall should come on the first night of the spellin’-school this season.”

“Oh, the young folks will not mind it—or, perhaps I should rather say, they will like it, since it will bring sleigh-riding, which they esteem a pleasure.”

“Well, I guess we’d better be gettin’ ready for ’em. I brung along a lot of candles, and I suppose the old candlesticks we used last winter have got to be fetched down from the loft.”

“No; I had them taken down and cleaned yesterday. They are piled behind my desk.”



“Good! I’ll put them up. Guess you’re right. Raccoon-Creek gals will turn out well, no matter whether there’s a snow-storm or not, and we want to get the place bright and cheerful, so ’s they’ll want to come again.”

The little colporteur had struggled on until the mighty wall of the Devil’s Backbone stood squarely up before him, bleak and black, seeming vast and inaccessible. Its head was far up in the very home of the tempest; its front covered with a writhing, twisting, quivering mass of arms, the leafless branches of the trees, that threatened and fought with the storm. The highway he was on ran along the creek to a little bridge half a mile farther down stream, across which lay the road that ascended the acclivity at its end. Each moment, as he trudged steadily toward the bridge, he glanced up at the frowning mountain. More and more repellent, even aggressive, it seemed. He grew afraid of it. At length he turned suddenly and ran down a cross-road that took him directly away from it, sobbing as he went :

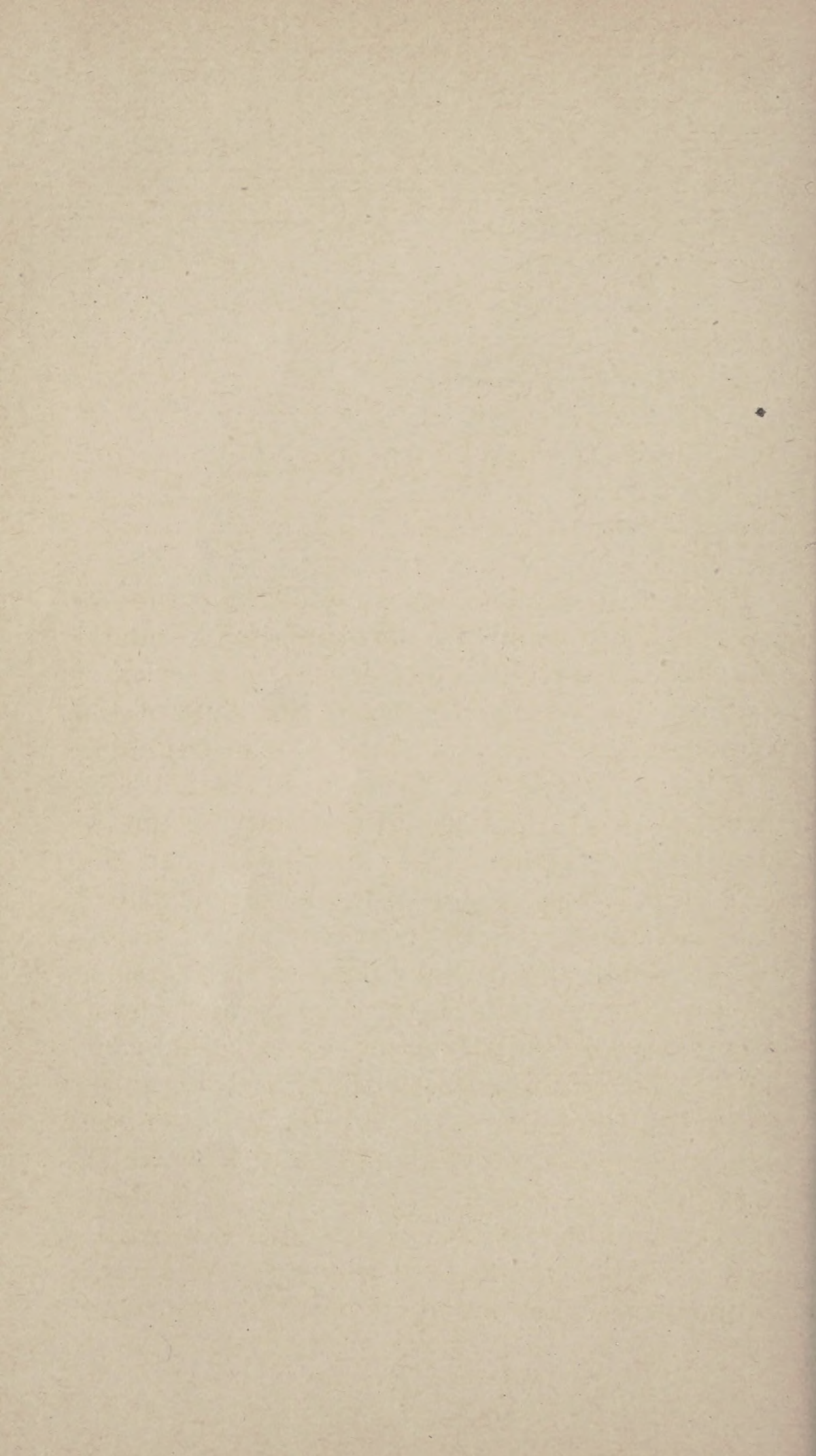
“No! No! I can’t do it! Not to save my life! Not even for their sakes!”



DANNY RAN OFF WITH THE PARSON'S TWO-YEAR-OLD COLT.—See Chapter V.











## CHAPTER VII.

### ORTHOGRAPHY AND CUPID.

Elder township claimed to hold the orthographic championship of Washington County. Three successive winters it had, in a series of spelling matches, held toward the close of the school seasons, defeated each of the adjoining townships, and none of those more distant ventured to contest its proudly vaunted claim to supremacy. Such amiable distinction had not been lightly won, and that it had been gained was due almost wholly to the persistent determination and educational ability of Mr. Parsons. Each winter, almost as soon as he opened school, he took the preliminary steps in the annual campaign. To begin with, he held two or three general spelling contests, to bring out the best orthographic talent of the community, from which he made up his class for special training. Maintaining standing in that class involved really hard work, for it was held only by merit. One by one its weaker members were weeded out



until only those remained who had a just confidence in themselves and in one another.

Had not the master, single-handed, the first winter he was here, defeated the neighboring townships! Ever since then he had been "ruled out" from active participation in the matches, it being generally conceded that he was "just the same as a dictionary." Every tricky little word, made difficult by the inclusion of letters that had no reasonable business in it, was known to him; with every contorted polysyllabic horror that no ordinary man could be expected to remember, he was upon terms of untrammelled intimacy; with every absurd word, spelled one way and pronounced another, he was familiar. The dictionary might, perhaps, know more about the mere meanings of words, but for their real use, that of being spelled, "it could give him no points."

Very bright and cheerful the old school-house interior was that stormy night, when people began to arrive. A rude candelabrum, made from a discarded buggy-wheel, pendent in the center of the room, supported a dozen candles; other candles, on the schoolmaster's desk, flanking the dictionary—which was displayed for style rather than use—and along the walls, made the place almost brilliant. Desks were piled out of the way and benches arranged in a double row on three sides of a central hollow square, as if for a dance. The stove glowed red, and the



big pot of water upon it steamed like a sap-kettle in sugar-making time. All these arrangements were the work of industrious Simeon Mulveil, the constable. He never knew clearly the line at which his official responsibilities ended, and, being determined to do his whole duty, was always ready for any service that the public interest seemed to him to demand.

"Early candle-light" being the understood hour for commencement of the proceedings and the participants being prompt—notwithstanding the storm, which only seemed to stimulate the hearty humor of all—the big school-room was soon filled by a bustling, mildly excited throng of friends and neighbors.

Whether it was due to the elevating influence of a study of orthography or to the mollifying effect of the presence of so many pretty girls may not be with certainty averred, but the fact is beyond dispute that at the spelling-school meetings not even a remembrance of that old grudge between the Camerons and the Mulveils ventured to show its ugly head. And this was really surprising, since at these earlier stages in the work of selection and training, two-thirds of those present would be in fighting humor before the evening was over. Mr. Parsons had a way of using keen sarcasms as pins to fasten in the memories of his class remembrance of the words they failed on, and, while his biting speeches certainly had that effect, they stirred up in his victims im-



pulses of rage that were often hard to repress. The girls sometimes could scarcely keep from crying, but if they had wept, Mr. Parsons would not have minded it in the least. Severity was, from his point of view, a necessary means to the end in which all had a common interest, and, after his verbal lash had ceased stinging, even the victims conceded that he was right.

Old folks and young, married and single, maids and bachelors, all took the floor, spelled as long as they could without error, and one by one went down in the struggle for survival of the orthographically fittest. Even the most enthusiastic advocate of spelling-matches as an improving sort of amusement could hardly have conscientiously pronounced the exercises altogether free from a flavor of monotony. Old Cyrus Ramsey made a welcome variation, when he was ignominiously thrown by "psilophyton," and talked back, avowing his convictions that the word was wrongly spelled in the dictionary and that it was an estray from some outlandish foreign language, which had no place properly in an English dictionary, anyway.

Under cover of the general hilarity over that episode, John Cameron, finding the gradual reduction of the class had brought him and Hetty Mulveil side by side, seized the opportunity to whisper to her :

"May I take you home to-night?"

With such a thrill of gladness in her heart as



made it hard for her to look unconscious and whisper low, she answered :

“ Yes.”

Only one word, and uttered in a tone not louder than a gentle sigh, but it prolonged itself in waves of delicious music in John's brain and dulled his sense of meaner sounds and things, so that he was promptly floored by a word that he knew as well as his own name, and had to sit down. But he didn't mind the temporary defeat. He was certain of being one of the elect, anyway. Parsons knew he could be depended upon in a serious emergency. But he did wish the school-master would not look so confoundedly knowing as if he understood how that word came to be missed.

Rufus Goldie, who had come to grief early in the game, having had more than an hour of nothing else to do than sit still and look at the girls, had made up his mind that Hetty Mulveil was the flower of the collection and that he would escort her home. It made him smile to think how cunningly he would maneuver to secure her company in advance of others less ingenious, who might have the same idea. Quietly he slipped out, when he saw that the exercises were drawing to a close, got his borrowed horse and cutter ready, returned and stood waiting. The instant the class was dismissed, he stepped quickly up to Hetty and, with what he deemed his most fascinating com-



bination smirk and bow, proffered the customary formal invitation :

“ May I have the pleasure of escorting you, Miss Mulveil ? ”

“ Thanks,” she replied, coolly. “ My arrangements are already made.”

Already ! Rufus was not simply surprised ; he was astounded. The possibility that his attentions might not be welcomed, even eagerly, had not occurred to him ; and his egotism suffered a rude shock. A couple of girls, who had heard both proposition and declination, giggled mischievously, and he knew that his having “ got the mitten ” would be a popular theme for heartless merriment at his expense. Worse yet, other girls, not wishing to have it said they would accept what Hetty Mulveil rejected, would also “ give him the mitten ” if he made advances to them. Confused and red with anger, he stood aside, sullenly determined to see what her “ arrangements ” were. In a minute more, he was satisfied—bitterly.

John Cameron, having unblanketed his horse and seen that the robes in the cutter were all right, returned to the school-room, with his big driving-coat on and his fur cap in his hand. Exultant happiness lighted up his handsome face, and he walked straight to Hetty, seeming to be conscious of nobody else, as if she had been alone among trees, instead of surrounded by other young persons. And Hetty, meeting



him with a smile, resigned herself to his assistance and care. He helped to put on her heavy cloak; aided in wrapping about her head the great, fleecy-white comforter, that was to keep her shapely ears from freezing; buttoned her gloves and tied the strings of the red woolen mitts that covered them. Then he put her hand on his arm and led her out to the sleigh, where he tucked her in warmly among the robes.

Rufus Goldie watched the proceedings, and, metaphorically speaking, gnashed the teeth of his soul. To have been "cut out" by any other man would have been bad enough, but that John Cameron should be his successful rival seemed to him an especial aggravation by malignant fate. Rolling the subject around in his mind it soon began to assume a strange form and color. He actually succeeded in making himself believe that he was in love with Hetty Mulveil. He was not really so; his feeling was wounded vanity, not jealousy: nevertheless the hallucination took an ineradicable hold upon him and, by persistent cherishing, eventually achieved a very strong simulation of reality, sufficient, in his estimation, to justify the intensified hate with which he regarded John Cameron.

But there was no such false analysis of impulses in the mind of the big constable, Simeon Mulveil. He was really and thoroughly in love with his pretty cousin Hetty, and had only been restrained by bashfulness from plainly setting



forth that fact to her long ago. Being at least a dozen years her senior, he had made the mistake of too long continuing to look upon her as a child. During at least a year past he had been saying to himself very erroneously that which he had been quite correct in, two or three years before :

“ She is too young to marry yet, and it would only scare her to say anything about it ; but, when the time comes, I ’ll be there.”

Well, the time had come and he was not there ; a fact that he was instantly and painfully conscious of when he met John and Hetty together coming out of the school-house door. What he saw in their faces and attitudes in that moment made him know that he had waited too long. Perhaps, for aught he then knew, only a day ; but that was enough for all the mischief possible to his cherished hopes. And that very evening his campaign was to have opened ! He had formulated what seemed to him an excellent plan for winning her by gradual approaches, commencing by taking her home in his sleigh from that first spelling-school of the season, and thenceforth, by weight of established precedent, continuing to do so all winter. By the time spring should come, he would have won her. After the first step, all would be easy. And now the first step had been taken—by John Cameron ! The recollection of that name added fuel to the fire of his jealous wrath. That a



Cameron should come poaching on the Mulveil preserves, capturing the fairest Mulveil in the valley, was unendurable. Simeon was in a fit mood for almost any desperate deed when he threw himself into his sleigh alone and lashed his horse into a gallop to be all the sooner away from the sound of voices and the sight of people.

Little knew or cared John and Hetty of the evil passions they left behind them as they sped swiftly away, to the merry jingle of the sleigh-bells and the confidential "'sh, 'sh" of the crisp, fresh-fallen snow. John could drive well with his right hand, which was fortunate, since his left was needed to hold Hetty securely in the cutter; and she nestled close up to him as if afraid she might fall out.

"I've always rather liked spelling-schools," said he, when they were well under way, "but I've a better opinion of them now than ever."

"Why, I hardly thought we did so well to-night as at the beginning, last year," she replied, demurely.

"I'm not thinking about that. So far as spelling is concerned, I wouldn't care if the dictionary was kicked over the moon. This is what I'm crowing about, this—right now."

"Why? Are you so fond of sleighing, Mr. Cameron?"

"Sleighing! Yes, I guess so, when I've got the dearest, sweetest, best girl in the world tucked in alongside me."



"Oh! Don't squeeze me so! You're strong as a bear, John."

"Did I hurt you, Hetty? I'm real sorry. Indeed, I am. I didn't mean to. It seems as if I was bound to be dangerous to you every time I come near you. First, I shoot you. You don't know how sorry I've been about that or how I've thought over it ever since."

"Don't do so any more. You were not to blame, and it didn't amount to anything at all."

"And you're sure you haven't got any hard feelings against me for it?"

"Why, of course I have not. What an absurd idea!"

"Will you prove it?"

"Prove it? Why, how?"

"By paying toll without a fight at the little bridge over the run that we are just coming to."

"I don't see what good it would do for me to fight with such a big, strong man as you are."

"Oh, Hetty, one look out of your eyes has more power than all my strength!"

"How you do go on, John!"

"Yes; we go on together—on the bridge, now."

She did not fight—of course not. Had she not already recognized the uselessness of attempting to do so? And their lips met frankly in a long, ardent kiss, the sweet sacrifice Love lays upon the altar of Custom, under the pretty, time-honored excuse of "paying toll."





## CHAPTER VIII.

### JOHN'S LOVE-MAKING.

“Until Sunday evening, then, Hetty.”

“Until Sunday evening, John.”

Those were the parting words between the lovers at the close of that happy ride from the spelling-school. Commonplace and unsentimental as a produce-market report they look in plain, cold type, but that is simply because the material inadequately shadows forth the spiritual. Love decks dull speech with the evanescent glamour of its own illusory charms. A glance, a blush, a sigh, a tremulous intonation, a pressure of the hand give to words such meanings as may not be found in any printed lexicons. Platitudes become poetic sublimities in the estimation of love, that egotistical passion which finds all things good wherein it may, in fancy, see its own reflection. Even “twice two are four” may be, by love’s magic, lifted from its low estate as an unexciting arithmetical axiom



up to the plane of glowing passion, and go, trembling and thrilling with the power of a kiss, from one fond heart to another. Perhaps the significance so bestowed upon words may be wholly imaginary, but there are philosophers who affirm that the imaginary is the only truly real.

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And now it is Sunday evening ; and John, in pursuance of that engagement, is rapidly nearing the widow Mulveil's, while Hetty is momentarily peeping out of the window to learn if he is yet in sight. And is he thinking only of her—occupied exclusively with thoughts of love? Hardly. He is nearing the imp as well as the angel. While he is courting Hetty in the house, his horse and cutter will be for hours at the mercy of Danny in the barn, and what deviltry may not be expected of that boy under such circumstances? Happily his horse is a famous kicker, and if Danny attempts to shave the animal's tail, there are strong grounds for the cheering hope that Danny will never smile again. Of course, the mischievous urchin will be likely to take out the shaft-bolts of the cutter and hide them, but John has another pair and a wrench in his overcoat pocket, so that will not be serious. Nothing is more probable than that the imp will saturate the sleigh-robies with water, which will be solid ice by the time John will want to go home. John debates with himself the advisa-



bility of carrying the robes into the house, and concludes that it will hardly do. Mrs. Mulveil might take offense at the implied suspicion concerning the safety of visitors' personal property in her barn; and, really, the robes would be no safer in the house, unless he should sit on them all evening. They will have to take their chances. But what else might Danny do? That boy's possibilities are not so much to be dreaded for what may be expected of him, as because of the infinite potentiality of unforeseeable cussedness latent in him.

Suddenly John's mind is lighted up by discovery of a means for averting the danger. Not in vain had the Rev. Mr. McLeod preached from that text about "making friends with the Mammon of unrighteousness."

While John is arriving at a resolution to make friends with Danny, at any reasonable sacrifice, that happy boy is having fun in the barn with a thin-skinned, mettlesome young mare, haltered in one of the stalls. Safe in an adjoining stall, he reaches out from time to time and snaps against the mare's unprotected hindquarters a thin strip of India-rubber, cut from a worn-out "gum-elastic" overshoe—one of the old-fashioned kind we had before the vulcanizing of caoutchouc was invented. The snap is not particularly painful, but the sensitive animal, resenting it as an indignity and annoyed by it until she is half-mad with nervous rage, squeals and kicks



frantically, to Danny's unspeakable delight. The climax of his enjoyment comes when John, leading his horse in on the barn floor, passes behind the mare, and nearly has his brains kicked out by her flying heels. There would be a bad quarter of an hour for the sprightly youth, if John Cameron were not so deeply and hopelessly in love with Hetty. But a lover is a creature devoid of free will. Even at the conscious sacrifice of duty and self-respect, he turns his back upon Themis to kneel before Eros. So John, instead of giving the evil urchin the trouncing he deserves, speaks him fair, seeks to win his good will, and even bestows upon him a silver half-dollar. Words do not go far with Danny, who shrewdly divines the situation, and feels himself master of it, but that princely gift of coin wins his allegiance. Never before has he had, at one time, so large a sum of money all his own, and his good fortune fairly overwhelms him. Prone to be as impulsively grateful as he is mischievous, he is henceforth an earnest partisan of John, who little realizes how effective an ally he has so cheaply secured. The boy, whose unconsciously adopted motto is "deeds, not words," has little to say, but Hetty may count upon trouble with him if she does not show proper favor, in his estimation, to the young man of his choice.

Dim is the brightness of the big fire in the sitting-room grate, by comparison with the light



shining from Hetty's happy soul through her beautiful eyes, and cold its glow beside her welcome; but her mother's greeting of the young wooer is barely tolerant, nothing more.

John lays his big driving-gloves on the stand, beside the family Bible and the lamp, takes the seat offered him near the fire and makes some show of warming his fingers to cover his embarrassment, for this is his first plunge into real courting, and he is somewhat at a loss for the proper course of procedure. It makes him feel awkward to have that old woman sitting opposite, eying him so critically. He remarks that the weather is cold and has seemed to be growing colder since sundown. Hetty evinces interest in his observations, but Mrs. Mulveil merely sniffs what he feels to be her ineffable contempt for such a hollow conversational pretense. Striving to appear at ease, he looks about him.

On the wall, fronting him, but too high to reflect his face, is a mirror. He wonders if it would make him double-nosed, like the one in his bedroom at home, or run his chin away off to the left and end it with a sharp point, as his mother's mirror does. All the mirrors he knows anything about do some such queer things. Several vividly colored lithographs adorn the room: George Washington, with his right hand in his breast, and looking very haughty; Gen. Winfield Scott, with a fierce expression and mounted on a pale horse, like Death in the *Apocalypse*; Andrew



Jackson, whose hair stands up so very stiffly that it seems to hurt him ; “ Contentment,” a simpering maiden, with long curls, a red rose over her right ear and a basket of cherries in her lap ; “ Hope,” another lackadaisical maid, with a white rose in her hair, and her eyes fixed upon the apparition of an anchor in the sky. But the chief work of art is a “ sampler,” done in colored wools, upon canvas, by Mrs. Mulveil, in her girlhood, by her affirmed to be “ Rebecca at the Well,” but very liable to be mistaken for Abraham at the altar upon which he purposes sacrificing Isaac.

The most impressive article of furniture in sight is a mahogany chest of drawers, very large and darkened by age, with handles and ornaments of polished brass. Fox’s “ Book of Martyrs” and “ The World and All it Contains”—the latter a surprisingly small volume for so large a title—are on the chest of drawers, together with a conch-shell, which is so propped up by a hymn-book that one does not readily notice how Danny has caved it in with a hammer, “ to find where its roar comes from.”

Mary Elder glides in, sits beside Hetty and whispers to her :

“ Oh ! How much he reminds me of Grant Guthrie !”

Doubtless any other presentable young man, coming on John’s mission, would equally remind the poor, lonely soul of her dead-and-gone lover,



but she actually does find so painful the memories evoked, that in a short time she withdraws, and John sees her no more during the evening.

Mrs. Mulveil, not having her knitting in hand—this being Sunday evening—takes “cat-naps” of uncertain length, before the fire, demonstrating a perverse capacity for coming broadly awake the instant he tries making love to Hetty. Each time her eyes fly open she starts a new theme for conversation, without regard to what preceded it. In this way, the goring of one of her most promising heifers by an ill-conditioned cow, is forced upon John’s unwilling attention. The last-mentioned subject revives recollection of the old quarrel over a somewhat similar incident between the Cameron and the Mulveil now peacefully slumbering, side by side, in the church-yard, and she grows moody and sullen. If John Cameron were not the best “catch” in that part of the county, how quickly she would show him the door.

John is beginning to wonder if the old woman intends to “sit him out,” or if she will go off to bed at nine o’clock, as a properly considerate mother should, and leave him to “sit up” with Hetty. Fifteen minutes more, if the tall clock in the corner is right, will decide the question. He steals an inquiring glance at Hetty, and she, understanding him, flashes back a bright, reassuring smile.

Away out on the road, but momentarily com-



ing nearer, they hear the jingle of sleigh-bells. The silvery harmony comes up the lane, passing the house, and goes on to the barn.

“For the land’s sake! Who’s that, at this time of night?” exclaims Mrs. Mulveil.

John and Hetty have no idea who the late visitor may be and exchange looks of disappointment and annoyance. A brief period of expectant silence ensues, then there is a rap at the door and, of all unwelcome visitors possible, the least desirable to the lovers appears—none other than Rufus Goldie, his face dark with a forbidding scowl.







## CHAPTER IX.

### A GENIAL IMP'S CAMPAIGN.

Hetty greets Goldie with cold constraint, and the formality with which he and John bow to each other is positively icy; but Mrs. Mulveil's welcome is cordial. She knows very well that he would not be a desirable match for Hetty, but there is time enough to think about that. Her present mood is one of gratification that his coming has "put the Cameron nose out of joint." So she retires for a few minutes to the kitchen; gives Hetty a meaning little smile and nod when she returns; says: "Good night" and goes off to bed, just as the tall clock's hands point to "IX," and its mendacious voice proclaims "III"—after the fashion of its erratic kind.

The young men sit upon opposite sides of the fire-place, with Hetty equidistant between them, and strive to be at once courtly toward her and haughty toward each other. But a haughty demeanor is a weak and inadequate expression for the passion of jealousy, and sometimes they



find momentary relief in glaring. Rufus's glare is simple, being the flower of personal hate; but John's is compound, having in it a spicy blend of disgust. Conversation languishes, though Hetty does her best to keep it going. They talk of the township's prospect for winning another orthographical victory; of the opening of the singing-school next week; of Reuben Jackson running away with Mattie Forsyth, and of Sam Latimer running away from his wife. And for none of these things do they care a button. It is all threshing chaff; fanning the east wind. The young men would much rather fight, and Hetty is rather afraid they will.

John, unable to stand it any longer, rises and affects an interest in the books on the tall chest of drawers. Hetty follows and stands beside him, to show him the first prize she won at school, "The Young Lady's Keepsake." He seizes the opportunity to whisper to her, through his clenched teeth:

"I'll sit him out until breakfast time, if you say the word."

"I would," she replied hurriedly, in a like suppressed tone, "only it would make mother so mad. You had better leave him to me. I'll take care he doesn't stop long—or come again. If you come next Sunday night you will not find him here."

His face lights up. What young man would not be happy when the girl of his heart so



plainly gives him to understand her preference for him?

Placid, contented and fully acquiescent, he resumes his seat by the fire. Rufus, already made uneasy by the whispering, fancies an expression of triumph on his rival's face, and imagines that an understanding has been arrived at between John and Hetty exactly the reverse of that which really exists. He is consequently much surprised when, after a few minutes, John makes a movement to rise, saying:

"Well, it's getting a sort o' late, and I guess I had better be going."

"Why, it's early yet, Mr. Cameron," exclaims Hetty, with affected protest, but a merry twinkle in her eyes.

"Early is the right time for me to go," responds John, "as I am going into Pittsburg with a load of flax in the morning, and even on an early start it is a long drive, with the roads as bad as they are now."

"That is so. Well, if you must go, I will not detain you. Let me show you out through the kitchen. It's a shorter way to the barn than by the path around the house."

With this excuse she rises to accompany him. The amazement of Rufus when he realizes that his hated rival is actually going, leaving the field clear to him, is beyond expression. That whispering had fully prepared him for a "sitting-out match," and a suspicion begins growing in his



mind that in some way his position has been adroitly flanked, though he cannot yet see exactly how.

“Good night, Mr. Goldie,” says John, with condescending courtesy, and Rufus stiffly replies: “Good night.”

The departing lover and the girl pass into the kitchen, closing the door behind them. John’s quick eye takes cognizance of a bountiful collation set out upon the kitchen-table—the subject of Mrs. Mulveil’s knowing smile and nod to her daughter just before retiring—and he looks inquiringly, but silently, from it to Hetty. Fully understanding him, she replies, in a low but emphatic tone:

“It’s to be hoped he will get something to eat before he touches a bite that’s there—or he’ll starve.”

The spirited girl resents her mother’s action in making such preparation for the unwelcome visitor after denying it, as she had, for the entertainment of the lover who might have rightfully expected it. And John instinctively comprehends her feeling, knows what has happened just as well as if she told him, for Love is very clear-sighted in seeing its own reflections in the loved one. With impulsive, passionate fondness, he throws his arms about her, presses her to his breast, and kisses her fervently, a demonstration that elicits no further opposition than the gently uttered protest:



“ Oh, John, don't !”

And she has to say : “ Oh, John, don't !” at least four times more before the back door is opened and he is gone.

When Hetty returns to the sitting-room, she notices that Rufus has assumed a sulky expression, probably resentful of her absence with John, which, however short, may have seemed long to him. It amuses her inwardly, but very demurely she sits down, not in her former place, but upon the chair John has vacated—twice as far away from Mr. Goldie. He says something, but she does not understand what, for she is listening to the tinkle of sleigh-bells, out at the barn, going down the lane and far away on the road, repeating over and over a melodious message to her, so plain that she fancies Rufus must hear and understand it :

“ Good night ! It's all right ! Coming again next Sunday night !”

But to egotistic Rufus the sounds are merely those of jingling sleigh-bells, going away with the rival he has driven from the field, and he becomes more at ease as they grow fainter in the distance. At length, he felicitates himself for this evening, at least, his troubles are over. He would not think so could he know what Danny is doing above his head ; he might justly have doubts about it if he only remembered Danny's existence.

Passive loyalty is an unthinkable condition to



“the Imp.” Activity is an inherent attribute of his being, and accident determines its manifestation in good or evil. Having voluntarily declared allegiance to John Cameron, it is with a noble joy that he has become aware of an opportunity to do partisan service. He had gone to bed, up in the garret, before Rufus Goldie came, but was not yet asleep, and heard the sleigh-bells announcing his coming as soon as anybody. And when Rufus entered the sitting-room, Danny’s eye was upon him as soon as anybody’s, for the puncheon floor of his garret, which is at the same time the ceiling of the company apartment below, is full of crevices and knot-holes. With characteristic precocity, he comprehended the situation below him as clearly as did either of the participants in it—and found it delightful. Fate, to indemnify him for his self-restraint toward John, had brought another predestined victim directly to his hands. The only question was what should he do with him. Hurriedly dressing himself, he glided out to the barn and opened the campaign by pouring a pail of water over Rufus’s lap-robcs in the cutter, and “skagging” the vehicle by tying a stout rope securely between the stanchions supporting its body at an oblique angle from left to right, near the runners, a happy device that rendered capsizing, on a rough country road, almost certain. Then he ran back to his observatory in the loft to watch and wait. When he saw John go away,



another inspiration came to him, and now, while Rufus is allowing his soul to sink into the content of fancied security and resigning himself to the mere sensuous charm of a pretty girl's companionship, which he erroneously imagines love, Danny is busy on his account.

By common consent the loft is Danny's domain, where he stores up his wealth of unconsidered trifles and miscellaneous "odds and ends," things absolutely valueless to older eyes, but in a boy's hands a very arsenal of witchcraft for mischief. Out of this mass of crude material he quickly selects and with deft fingers combines, working by the light of his solitary tallow candle and unconscious of the nipping cold, an amazing and terrible-looking spider. Its body, which must have weight, is made of a large bullet, cleft to hold a string and wound around with a fluffy bunch of red woolen yarn. Half a dozen black feathers, their vanes trimmed to near the stalks and roughened up to give a hairy look, make the legs. A strip of India-rubber between the bullet and the long string attached gives the thing elasticity, so that, when he makes a slight jerking motion as it hangs from his fingers, its body seems to leap and its legs to quiver with a hideously life-like semblance. As a home-made tarantula, the thing is an artistic triumph.

Cautiously he pokes it through a knot-hole directly above Rufus Goldie, lowers it to within a couple of feet of his head, and then, peering



down, lingers for a moment to revel in the joy of anticipation. The young man, unluckily for him, has assumed the attitude that to the bumkin's mind is expressive of graceful ease, balancing himself on the back legs of his chair and slightly rocking it. Hetty's quick eye catches the thing poised above his head, and, though in a moment she recognizes it as one of Danny's favorite contrivances, a startled expression first flits over her face and an involuntary exclamation rises to her lips. Rufus, following up her line of sight, suddenly beholds the giant spider seemingly pouncing down upon his face, and, with an exclamation of alarm, throws himself backward to avoid it, losing his balance and coming down with a crash, his arms and legs sprawling wildly. The spider darts up to the knot-hole and vanishes; Hetty screams with uncontrollable laughter; Mrs. Mulveil thrusts her night-capped head in from her bed-room door to demand "what the 'nation has broke loose"; Rufus, awkwardly scrambling to his feet and with comic ruefulness rubbing his bruised back, gasps: "Well! Of all the gol-derned things!" and up in the loft a thoroughly happy boy hugs himself and rolls on the floor in an ecstasy of delight.

Hetty, unable to stop her laughter, which has become almost hysterical, while looking at the discomfited young man, runs away to the kitchen. Mrs. Mulveil, who resents being waked up, persists in wanting to know:



"What on earth is the matter?"

"Nothing," answers Rufus, sheepishly.

"Well, don't let it happen again," the widow warns him severely, and retreats to her room.

Rufus retakes his chair, planted now firmly on its four feet, and waits in a most uncomfortable frame of mind, with one eye trained on the ceiling in anxious expectancy of the spider's return, the other directed toward the kitchen door. Minutes pass and Hetty does not re-appear, but presently Mary Elder enters in her stead, and, struggling vainly to repress her mirth, says:

"Hetty asks will you not please excuse her. She has laughed so much that she has a headache and will have to go to bed at once."

"Certainly," replies Rufus, very stiffly, with a dignity that is irresistibly funny, rising and stalking to the door, where he says a curt: "Good night," and goes out, closing the door after him with a slam.

On the way to the barn he thinks bitterly:

"She needn't think she'll ever get me here again to make a fool of me. But I'll be even with her. I'll make her sorry, and him, too. He put her up to it before he went—curse him!"

When he gets in among the icy robes in his sleigh and starts his "skagged" vehicle on a troublous journey home, his bitterness is intensified. But up in the loft a merry girl winds her arms about a happy boy and kissing him, says:

"You are a good little imp, after all, Danny."





## CHAPTER X.

### DANGER FOR JOHN.

Early in the summer preceding the happenings here narrated, a good, douce, middle-aged Scot, on his way from Edinb'ro' to Ohio—where he expected to purchase land—stopped for a visit among the Camerons of Elder township, to whom he claimed some distant relationship. The beauty and fertility of the country, in the Raccoon Creek Valley particularly, and the presence here of numbers who at least “knew his forbears,” and were presumably kin to him, brought about a change in his plans and instead of going on to “the Western Reserve,” as he had intended, Roger McFarlane bought a half-section of good, though unimproved, farming land from the widow Cameron—John's mother—and settled down. He was a bachelor, upon the verge of being classed as an “old” one, and arranged to live at the widow Cameron's until such time as he could build a home for himself



on his own acres, an achievement that he feared would be far enough off to give him more than ample time to find a mistress for that home among the buxom lassies abounding in the neighborhood.

Acquainted only with the hard individual struggle and sharp competitive strife of existence in the old world, Mr. McFarlane had no idea of the common helpfulness by which our early settlers brought their co-operative forces to bear for the accomplishment of their heaviest toils, such as would have been beyond the strength and means of individuals. Hence he arrived, by careful calculation, at the conclusion that it would take him about two years of hard, unremitting toil to erect a suitable house and barn and to clear a couple of tillable fields. Of course, that time might be considerably shortened, if he could make up his mind to hire help, but he was loth to part with the "siller" in hand and bravely made up his mind to do himself all that was possible for him, employing assistance only in the absolutely needful work of raising the heavy logs of which the buildings would be constructed, a job necessarily far in the future.

John Cameron, seeing a chance for such a surprise-party as does not occur twice in a man's lifetime, took care not to encourage Roger to any different hope, and readily won the coöperation of all who came to know and consequently to like the patient, industrious, kindly-faced Scot,



in keeping him from even a suspicion of what was in store for him. And all through the summer and fall Roger worked steadily on, under John's constant advice. Upon so much of his land as he proposed to clear, he cut down the trees, trimmed them, burned the brush and chopped the logs according to their adaptability for building, fencing or firewood. He even "rough-squared" those intended for the house, John having advised him to do so in order that they might be better seasoned when he came to build. And he chose the site for his new home, which John approved.

One cold and brilliantly clear December morning Roger McFarlane was inexpressibly astonished. He had just commenced felling a huge white-oak tree, when half a dozen neighbors gathered about him. Hardly had he exchanged greetings with them when several more joined the group, and before he could express his surprise more came trooping in from all directions, until he saw around him some forty stalwart men, provided with axes, cant-hooks, handspikes, horses, bob-sleds, log-chains and other tools and appliances for clearing and building. With them, of course, came a little army of boys and dogs. The men simply said: "Good morning" to him and went to work. Some leveled the ground where the house and barn were to stand, others hauled the very corner-stones he had selected and the logs he had ready squared, and



commenced putting up the two structures with a celerity and expertness that fairly took his breath away. While this was going on, another detachment split into rails the logs selected for that purpose, and piled compactly those set apart for firing. The boys busied themselves firing brush-heaps and chasing with the dogs the rabbits that ran out of them. The air was full of the shouts of men; neighing and tramping of horses; rattle of chains, sharp ringing of axe-strokes; yelping of dogs and the dull reverberations made by heavy timbers dropping from the ends of "skids" upon the gradually rising walls, where the skillful "notch-and-saddle" axemen were at work. Nobody took any directions from Roger McFarlane or seemed to pay any attention to him, and he wandered around in a dazed way from group to group, saying, now and then: "Ech! Mon! It's just wonderful! I dinna understand it at all!" and occasionally biting the second knuckle of one of his forefingers, as if to reassure himself that it was not all a dream. Behind his back, his hearty neighbors winked slyly at each other and chuckled jollily, fully appreciating his bewildered amazement, and resolved to keep him mystified as long as possible.

By common consent, ever since houses were first raised in the valley, such gatherings were occasions of peace and at least apparent goodwill, which not even the old grudge between



the Camerons and the Mulveils was permitted to disturb. There was plenty of time for fighting that out, even when it was most active, without sacrificing to it the duty of reciprocal service and the commonalty of interest demanding consolidated unity of forces in dealing with the natural obstacles of their environment. And now, since the feud was generally dulled in sober memories, and but for the women and hot-headed young men would perhaps die out before long, it was easy to ignore it altogether without even a sense of constraint upon any one, especially at a "frolic" upon neutral ground, as Roger McFarlane's farm was justly considered. With hearty good-humor and thoroughly neighborly feeling then the work went merrily on, amid such orderly confusion as the Scot had never before participated in, until a distant horn sounded the dinner-hour. Then Roger received a new surprise.

By evident prearrangement, men, boys and dogs set out together in an irregular procession for the widow Cameron's, where ample provision had been made for their hospitable entertainment. Two long tables were spread for them, with bountiful lading of stewed chickens, roast turkeys and geese, fried ham, roast mutton, hot biscuits, corn-bread, honey, apple-butter, quince preserves, doughnuts, pies and what not else of the lavish supply of good things familiar to Pennsylvanian rural feasts, then and now.



All were quickly in their places, and half a dozen bright-eyed girls busied themselves filling the cups with steaming hot coffee, which the diners sweetened to their taste with lumps of home-made maple-sugar. An old white-haired man rapped sharply with his knife upon the plate before him, and, in obedience to the signal, conversation was instantly hushed, the girls with the coffee-pots stopped motionless, and a moment of perfect silence ensued. Then the old man's voice, low and thin, but penetrating in that sudden stillness, devoutly uttered the words:

“For Thy bounty, of which we are about to partake, oh, Lord, make us truly thankful. Amen.”

Then appetite was given the reins, and all fell to, with a great clatter of table tools and buzz of talk.

That moment's pause and hush had given Roger McFarlane time to think. He saw now all the details of the generous and kindly conspiracy, and it overwhelmed him with grateful emotion, as he realized how long a time these good people had been planning and contriving for this most complete issue of benefit to him. Surely, he thought, it would be the least he could do to make acknowledgment of their generous kindness, and he stood up. But his heart was already in his throat with emotion; the unwonted sight of four-score eyes staring in



steady expectancy embarrassed him, and he could only stammer :

“ Ma friends, the like o’ this is a’ verra new and strange to me, and ma heart is sae full that it’s like to choke me. I had only thocht maself a lonely wanderin’ carle, but a little acquent in a strange land ; and I’ve waukened to ken maself at hame, surroounded by brithers. I canna say mair, or ma heart will loup frae ma lips. I’m joost—”

And at that point he really did “break down,” his voice failing him and the tears welling up in his eyes, as he dropped back upon his seat. Very heartily they applauded him, with many reassuring expressions of kindly appreciation and personal esteem, in the midst of which, Uncle David Henderson’s deep, bass roar drowned all other voices, with the reply :

“ Say no more about it, man, unless to show us you’re an orator. Why, there’s not a house or a barn in the township that was not raised in the same way. How else would men get along in a new country if they didn’t stand by one another? You’re not under a straw’s weight of obligation to us. We are only doing our duty, and proud and happy we are that it is for a friend and neighbor like Roger McFarlane.”

A burst of hearty applause set the seal of popular approval upon his words, and a dozen of those nearest to Roger gave emphasis to that expression by warmly shaking his hand. When



John Cameron, among the rest, reached across the table to do so, the warm-hearted and grateful Scot retaining his grasp said :

“ Ah ! Jock. It was a' your contrivin'. God grant ye a' your days as light a heart as it is already good.”

Away down the table Simeon Mulveil, speaking very low and taking care not to draw the attention of others to the subject of his conversation, said to Rufus Goldie, who sat by his side :

“ Is it a silver spoon you have in your cup ?”

“ It is.”

“ Look carefully, without attracting notice, and tell me, if you can, what initials are on it.”

“ Either ‘ R. W. B.,’ or ‘ R. B. W.,’ I can't make out sure which, they are so curley-cued together.”

“ The same as mine. I can't think of anybody ever belonging to the Camerons, or in Raccoon Creek Valley, with them initials.”

“ Well ; what of it ?”

“ It looks queer. Where do you suppose they came from ?”

“ Thunder ! How should I know ? Borrowed them for the ‘ frolic,’ I suppose ; folks generally do have to borrow to set a table for so many. Or bought them, for all I know.”

“ No. Silver spoons, with initials on 'em, aint bought and sold. They belong to women-folks and are handed down in the family. They might have borrowed 'em, only I can't think who from.”



“ Well, in the name of the everlastin’ trumpet, what odds does it make?”

“ A heap of odds; if I could only call up something I’ve seen or heard, but that I’ve disremembered now.”

Simeon seemed to lose himself in reverie, striving to awaken some dormant spark in his memory, eating mechanically the while and keeping his eyes fixed in an unconscious stare upon a dish of pickles before him. When Rufus sought to recall him to himself and question him further, he merely growled :

“ Lemme ‘lone.”

When dinner was over the men went back to work, whither they were soon followed by the boys, who had been fed at the second table. With such hearty good-will did they apply themselves to the friendly toil, that before the short day was nearly done a ten-acre field had been put in good shape for the spring corn-planting, the rails split for fencing it in on two sides at least, and the barn and house were nearing the point where they could be left for one or two persons to finish by roofing, “ chunk-and-daubing,” and the erection of a chimney to the dwelling, when the weather grew warmer. They had even done something more than had been contemplated at the outset, by running up the walls of a substantial and commodious “ spring-house,” a convenience that Mr. McFarlane had not thought of, and the sudden creation



of which was a new subject of amazement to him.

About the middle of the afternoon the Rev. Mr. McLeod rode over, not to take a hand, but simply to see how they were getting along, and demonstrate his sympathetic interest in the proceedings. Work had by that time slackened, and as he rode into the clearing a dozen voices hailed him with demands that he should come and explain something they were puzzled to account for.

"Why is it," they asked, "that if six men stand around a seventh lying on the flat of his back, and they all hold their breath, the six, with just the tips of their fore-fingers under him, can lift the seventh and fling him as high as their heads, without his seeming to weigh more than a feather pillow would?"

The parson, with the craft of his profession, was not going to permit himself to be caught trying to explain something he did not know to be a fact, nor yet to be betrayed into easy confession that there was anything he did not know; so he temporized:

"A certain king," he said, "once propounded, to a number of the wisest men in his realm, the question why it was that a live fish, weighing several pounds, would not increase by so much as an ounce the weight of a vessel of water in which it was placed. The wise men had many curious and ingenious theories to offer in explan-



ation of the alleged fact, and almost came to blows in the heat of their discussion. Finally, after they had wrangled over it for several hours, the king's fool entered among them triumphantly proclaiming: 'I know! I know all about it!' 'Well,' they demanded, 'what do you know?' 'That it isn't true. I have just tried it with a live fish and a kettle of water.' And the fool was right—it was one of the king's jokes."

"Oh, but this is true!" shouted several voices. "Here, Jim, lie down again! Get around, boys!"

In a moment, one of the young men stretched himself out on his back, upon a log, holding his arms straight by his sides, and half a dozen others stationed themselves, three on each side, with merely the tips of six forefingers touching him. One of the bystanders exclaimed, "Hold in;" and the seven held their breath, until they seemed to swell and grew red, when—just as it was evident they could not continue the restraint a second longer—he ordered "Now!" And instantly the recumbent man seemed to float up in the air, not as a lifted weight, but rather as a cork, liberated deep down in water, darts up to the surface. Manifestly, the six had employed no exertion, such as would have been necessary to toss the sturdy young fellow up in that fashion under ordinary conditions.

The minister was astonished, and felt that his confidence in the law of gravitation had been



strangely betrayed. As for an explanation, he had none, and having none, he very naturally, from his point of view, was disposed to stigmatize the incomprehensible thing as "the work of the devil," a time-honored, clerical way of meeting all sorts of difficulties. A fortunate diversion, however, saved him from committing himself to even that orthodox refuge. The arrogant hound-pup, that had followed him upon the ground, overweeningly conscious of distinction as the minister's dog, had been achieving a steadily increasing unpopularity among the other dogs by his supercilious manners, until eventually, a cur of low degree, taking grievous offense at his ostentatious scorn, suddenly mounted him and took a sample piece from his neck. The pup's hasty comments on the outrage were uttered in a tone so piercing, that all the other plebeian dogs seemed suddenly inspired by a frenzy to keep him up to concert pitch, and joined in a general *mêlée*, with him as the central point of their ferocious activity. A bucket of water hurled upon them put a speedy end to the fight, but the fear of having his tattered pup still further damaged was excuse enough for the minister to hasten away without spending any time in theorizing upon strange phenomena in natural philosophy. As he rode off, he called back :

"If I get time, I will send a communication about it to the *Washington Intelligencer*."

Sim Mulveil wheeled quickly to Goldie, who



was his constant companion, and slapping him on the shoulder, exclaimed in a tone of triumph:

"I've got it, b' gosh!"

"Got what?"

"What I was trying to think of. The name of that paper brung it back to me. It was in the *Intelligencer* I saw it, a good two months ago."

"Well, what was it, anyway?"

"Never you mind just now. I've got to go over to Washington and see the papers that far back, before I say for certain. But you'll see the pride of that conceited John Cameron taken down a good many pegs before long, and with them spoons, too."

"What! You don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do. But you keep your jaw shut about it. I'll do nothing until I get good and ready, for when I strike, it will be for keeps. If I don't take him, I'll quit bein' constable."

"Why, Sim! You don't mean to say them spoons are—"

"Yes, I do. Stolen, b' gosh!"

"Lord! I hope you'll prove it on him—whether it's so or not. I'll help you all I can."

"Well, you may be able to swear to something when the time comes. One way or another, I've got to land him in jail or kill him."





## CHAPTER XI.

### THE CONSPIRACY.

During the night succeeding Roger McFarlane's frolic, there was a heavy fall of snow. That which first came down was moist and clinging, but as the hours of darkness went by, the still air grew colder and colder, and the niveous crystals, dry, light and fleecy, piled high upon even the smallest twigs in the forest and bridged over the spaces between them, so that the boughs bent with the weight of a simulated foliage of immaculate whiteness.

Like "a new heaven and a new earth," fresh and pure from the fashioning of their Creator, hushed yet in the awe of first consciousness of being, shone the cloudless sky and no less spotless world beneath, upon which beamed the golden rays of the morning sun. But all the refulgent white glory that flooded the universe was cold and still as death itself.

Slowly and with an air of protest, animated Nature awoke to recognition of the temporary



domination of the inanimate. The peewits, nesting under the eaves of the barn, were first to see what had happened, and discontentedly twittering to each other, agreed it was quite hopeless to look for a breakfast under all that snow, and they had best stay in their warm shelter until the prospect improved. A gallant game-cock, champion of the barnyard, forebore his customary matutinal challenge to the universe, and floundering awkwardly through the deep snow to the refuge of an overhanging straw-pile, looked about him with disgust and regret that he had left his comfortable roost.

The sun was well up before a faint spiral of smoke lazily floated straight toward the zenith from the kitchen chimney of the house, for the morning was Sunday, when late rising is permissible even on a farm. A couple of dogs, sniffing the odor of breakfast in the air, crawled out from under the porch and stretched themselves in time to meet John Cameron and give him their honest canine greeting as he emerged from the kitchen door with an axe in his hand.

"The deepest snow yet this winter, mother," he announced, in a cherry voice, looking back into the house before closing the door behind him.

The fences were half-buried; the round, compactly grown apple-trees in the orchard looked like enormous snow-balls; the well-sweep, swollen to colossal proportions by the accumulation



of snow upon it, suggested a fanciful resemblance to the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

John's first duty was the breaking of the ice in the watering-trough for the cattle. In quick response to the sound of his chopping the chorus of farm-life broke forth—horses neighing in their stalls, bells tinkling among the sheep in their shelter under the barn-floor and the cows in their stable, pigs squealing shrill demands for immediate feed, chickens fluttering down from the hen-house and squawking in foolish alarm at finding themselves engulfed in the snow.

Three hours later, John, mounted on his big black horse, and dressed in his best, rode down the lane on his way to church. All the church-going in the valley that day had to be upon horse-back; the unbroken snow in the roads being much too deep to admit of speedy or comfortable sleighing. But that was no hardship in a community of equestrians, and would make little difference in the attendance at the meeting-house, to which everybody, practically, made a habit of going pretty regularly, whether Presbyterians or not. In the valley one was either a Presbyterian, in sympathy at least, or nothing, as no other sects had yet gained a foothold there, and it was not fashionable to have oneself looked upon as "nothing" from a religious point of view.

The black horse found himself much surprised



and annoyed by the constraint his rider put upon his pace. He was not accustomed to being required or even permitted to go at a walk with John on his back, yet here they were a good two miles from church and a tight rein still kept on him. Horses think and know more, however, than people are prone to give them credit for, and it is not impossible that he may have fully understood the situation when he discovered that he had been made to arrive at a certain cross-road just as a very charming bay mare—carrying a young woman, whose attractions were doubtless more apparent to his master than to himself—emerged from that cross-road.

“Good morning, Miss Mulveil!” said John, speaking with deferential diffidence, for the young man must be much more hardened in the ways of gallantry than he was, who can, without some bashfulness, attempt love-making in the open air, in broad daylight, on the highway.

“Good morning, Mr. Cameron,” she responded demurely.

“Going to meeting, I suppose?”

“Family has to be represented, and none of the others will venture out.”

“Why? I’m sure it’s a lovely day for anybody to be abroad, who is not sick folks.”

“Well, mother thinks she may have rheumatism, from the change of weather; the snow hurts Miss Elder’s eyes; and, as for Danny, he just wouldn’t come.”



"If Danny prefers one place more than another, it is most probably because of some better prospect for deviltry that his genius for mischief has discovered."

"You mustn't be too hard on Danny," laughed Hetty. "You don't know how good a boy he was last Sunday night."

"He a good boy! How so?"

She told him the story of Rufus's discomfiture, narrating it so graphically that it seemed to John he could see his rival sprawling on the floor.

"Danny *is* a good boy," he affirmed emphatically, "and nobody shall ever again hear me say otherwise. I mean to buy a gun for him the next time I go to town."

"You have made an ally of him already. I never knew him to take up so for anybody else as he does for you. I'm afraid such a magnificent present as a gun would spoil him altogether."

"Nothing is too good for a boy who has his genius for running off trespassers."

"Trespassers!"

"Yes. Anybody else than me, who comes to see you, is a trespasser."

She looked up at him with an arch smile, blushed and dropped her eyes, without reply in words, but words were not necessary for him to understand her.

"Don't you think it natural for a man to feel that way about the girl he loves?"



"What do I know about how a man feels when he is in love?"

"Well, you'll learn before long from my telling you."

"Oh! Then you are in love?"

"You know I am—and with you, Hetty."

"Why, how should I know that? You never mentioned it to me before."

"Do you mean to say that you have not known it ever since the day we met up on the 'Backbone?'"

"Well, perhaps I might have suspicioned something, if I had known as much as most girls do about such things."

"It hasn't been so very long since I found it out myself. And that seems a mighty queer thing, too, that I should have seen you grow up right under my nose, all these years, and never have taken any notice that you were the loveliest and most lovable girl in the world and the only one I could ever care for, until I found it out by shooting you. I tell you it was a mighty big surprise when it came to me solid, Hetty. And it has made the whole world different to me. I never knew before how happy a person could feel. Why, I'm seeing all there is in the world worth caring for, to me, when I look into your eyes, darling."

The girl's eyes sparkled with happiness, but her cheeks were red as flame, and she glanced anxiously up and down the road.



"I didn't see you at spelling-school, Thursday night," she said hastily, as if interposing a new topic to block John's too rapid public progress.

"No. I had to go over to Noblestown, about a span of horses and didn't get back in time."

"You didn't object to going away and leaving Rufus Goldie with me?"

"No. When you told me to do so, I saw I was perfectly safe."

"You talk as if you were sure of me already."

"Of course I am. How could I be otherwise? I love you, and you know it. And you love me, and I know it."

"Laws! John Cameron, you don't know any such thing."

"Every kiss you gave me last Sunday night was an affidavit to it. I've got too good an opinion of you, Hetty, to think your kisses could go where your heart didn't. Yes, it's just solid love between us, and why should we waste time pretending anything else, making believe what we know in our hearts isn't true and what we wouldn't, either of us, have the other think so for all the world?"

"John, ain't you a little afraid, sometimes, that you are a very sudden young man?"

"Maybe I am, but life is short. I'd rather be sudden about getting what I want than sorry for losing it through slowness. Which do you yourself think is best, Hetty?"

"Well—it isn't good to be too slow, John."



“Spoken like a sensible girl, my darling. And now, when shall we get married?”

“Oh! It’s too soon to talk about that.”

“Not a bit. We mean to get married, don’t we?”

“I—I don’t know. Oh, John, what do you want to talk that way for, on the road to meeting, and in broad daylight! You ought to be ashamed.”

“I’d be ashamed of myself if I didn’t take any opportunity that offered.”

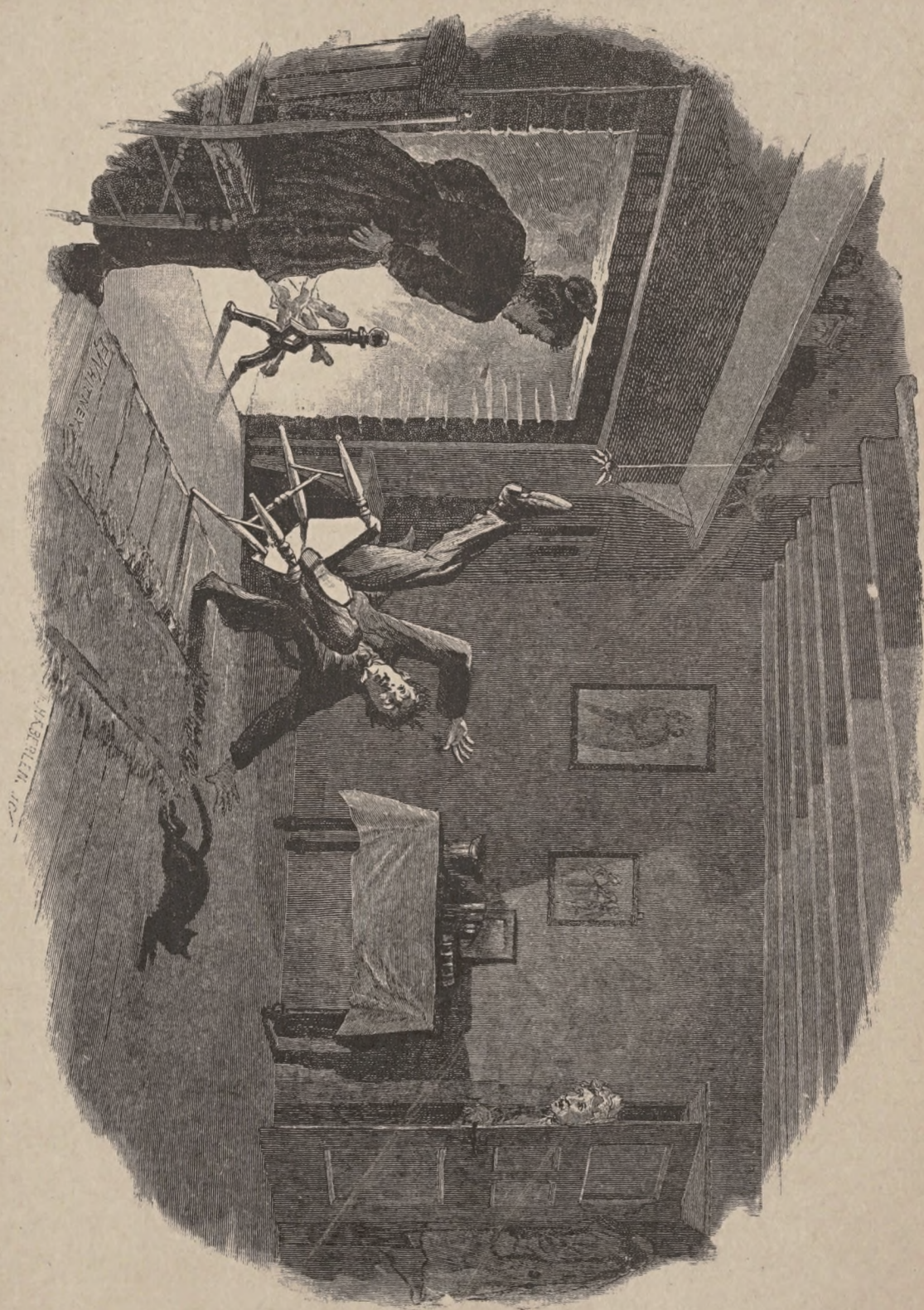
“How much practice you must have had talking to girls, to be so bold about it.”

“Practice? No. I’ll take my oath that I never before, in all my life, said to any girl or woman, except my mother, the words: ‘I love you.’ And when I say them to you, Hetty, they are as true and come as straight from my heart as they ever did when I spoke them to her. I simply don’t see why a man should be shame-faced, or beat about the bush, in baring his heart to the girl he loves well enough to make his wife; and that brings me back to the question I asked you before—we mean to get married, don’t we?”

“John, you’re riding up closer and closer alongside of me, until you are scrouging my mare off the road, and I just know, if I’d say: ‘Yes,’ you’d grab me round the waist and kiss me, and people would be sure to see us, and I’m not going to get myself talked about. If you



THE TRIUMPH OF A GENIAL IMP—See Chapter IX.









want my answer, you can come over to-night and get it."

"Why, you darling, that's good enough answer for the present! Oh, how I do love you, Hetty! Come back into the road; you needn't be afraid of my cutting up right out here before folks. I won't say but what I want to. The man wouldn't be human who could love a girl as I love you, and see her bright eyes and pouting lips so close to him, without wanting to— There! Hold on! Don't start off that way! I won't do anything. Thunder! We're almost there, and at that gait we wouldn't have five minutes more to talk."

"Come along. We can do our talking to-night, without setting other folks talking to-day. There's a whole lot of people coming down the ridge-road, and on the rise of the hill behind us are two men, and I do believe one of them is Rufus Goldie."

Hetty's keen sight had correctly identified the distant horseman as Rufus Goldie, and if she had taken a second look, she would have known equally well his companion, who was none other than Simeon Mulveil. Rufus lived at the constable's house most of the time, instead of staying where he properly belonged, among his nearer relatives, over in Fayette County, near Uniontown. The two men not only harmonized well in character, but had business relations which brought them into close association.



Mulveil, who was a widower, owned a good farm and a saw-mill—the latter an inheritance from his wife, to whom it had been left by a former husband. Rufus ran the mill, on shares, and also did some work on the farm when the head of water was too slack for sawing, or lumber not in demand. Hence, he and Simeon, thrown much together in their hours of labor, had got into the habit of each other's society, generally went abroad in company and were as nearly friends as it was possible for such natures to feel friendship. There was secretly between them at this time, however, a good deal of jealousy, for each knew that the other was a rival suitor for Hetty Mulveil's hand. That feeling would probably have separated them, had they not been linked by the bond of common hate for John Cameron, whom they instinctively recognized as the one destined to carry away the prize from both of them.

Following and spying on this ride to church, they saw, and gnashed their teeth at seeing, how closely the black horse and the bay mare moved along together and how slowly they went.

"I 'd like to put a bullet through him," growled Rufus Goldie.

"So would I; but I wouldn't like to be hanged for it," snarled the constable.

"You 're always afraid of the law."

"The law 's something to be afraid of."

"No; not the law, but getting caught."



“The law has a tarnation long reach.”

“It don’t go as far as a gun though—between man and man.”

“It’ll go far enough in John Cameron’s case to suit me.”

“Do you feel like speaking any plainer to-day than you did yesterday about that.”

“I don’t mind telling you, but you must keep it mighty close, for if he got word of it before I am ready to jump on him, he might not be there when I landed.”

“I’m not likely to do anything that would be much good to him.”

“Well, it’s just this. I saw in the paper, about two months back, that there was a robbery of silver spoons from a house over by Canonsburg somewhere. I read all such things because it’s my official duty, but my memory isn’t good and I can’t recollect names well. That’s nothing, though. I can go over to Washington to-morrow or next day and see the paper. And I’m just as sure as that I’m alive the spoons we saw yesterday are the stolen ones. I feel it in my bones so I could swear to it.”

“But how are you going to prove he stole them?”

“I don’t have to. If I find them in his possession, it’ll be for him to prove he didn’t steal them. Even if he gets off he will have been put in jail anyway, and that’s enough. Hetty Mulveil isn’t likely to marry any jail-bird.”



Rufus winced, though he said nothing. For reasons best known to himself references to jail-birds grated on all there was of sensitiveness in his being.

“Yes,” pursued the constable, “If I find it’s all right when I see the paper, as I’m sure I shall—I’ve got them initials marked down, ‘R. W. B.’ or ‘R. B. W.,’ and one or the other is bound to be right—I’ll get the warrant for him at once. But I won’t serve it until Thursday, “Training Day,” when half the county will see him taken as a thief.”

Rufus started with the impulse of a sudden thought, looked fixedly in his companion’s eyes for a moment, and said in a low tone of suggestion rather than of inquiry :

“And if he resists arrest?”

The constable clenched his jaws with a snap :

“Then something bad may happen to him—in a perfectly legal way.”

The two scoundrels grinned at each other in sympathy, shook hands and rode on at a livelier pace after the couple, who had by this time disappeared under the grove surrounding the house of prayer.





## CHAPTER XII.

### “CAMERONS TO THE RESCUE!”

“Training Day” was one of the great occasions of the year. Men who had “fit the British” were not scarce; the Mexican War yet too recent for its heroes to be much spoken of as “veterans,” except for oratorical effect; and a vaguely pleasing impression pervaded the country that the American citizen should stand, metaphorically, with a chip on his shoulder, inviting some effete monarchy to “knock it off and get licked.” Martial spirit and patriotic pride stimulated a general interest in keeping alive military organizations. Of course, the best “volunteer” forces must see much service before they attain the steadiness and discipline of “regulars,” and our best military establishment attainable then was very far below such perfection as the severely effective school of civil war has since taught us in the adaptation of our militia forces for ready mobilization as a “National Guard.” But our militia was larger



then, in proportion to the population, than it is now, and perhaps was infused with more spontaneity of patriotic enthusiasm than has been observable in later days, particularly since its main employment has been in the overawing and crushing of labor demonstrations. Then, every man capable of bearing arms was, not merely nominally and theoretically, but practically a member of it, supposably ready and eager to rush forth, at any moment, armed with his own gun, supplied with his own ammunition, clad according to his own means and fancy, and at least measurably provided with his own rations, to exterminate foreign foes, wholesale or in job lots, as they might see fit to present themselves. To be an American and to have a gun were the only real essentials, in popular estimation. The man who could not be depended upon to do good fighting "on his own hook," independent of how anybody else might be getting on in the *mêlée* of a battlefield, would not have been considered of much account.

Few were prepared to affirm that there was not a desirable quality of style about company and even regimental evolutions in time of war, but a popular feeling existed that rehearsal of such things during profound peace was little better than threshing chaff and winnowing the east wind. Should they ever be necessary, Americans could pick them up in a few days. Hence, "Training Day," though everywhere



observed as an occasion for enthusiastic demonstration of patriotic and martial spirit, involving not a little noisy jubilation and license, was seriously lacking in the educational character contemplated by the law.

Very early in the forenoon the population of the whole country-side seemed to be flocking *en masse* into the little town of Washington, the county-seat, and its streets were soon thronged with equestrians and sleighs of all sorts and sizes, from the dainty “cutter” to the ponderous farm-wagon body temporarily mounted upon bob-sled runners. Not only the defenders of the Republic came to town on “Training Day,” but their mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts as well; for there was both a gallant show to see and shopping, long deferred for this occasion, to be done. Women packed each of the general stores, where dry goods, ploughs, crockery, school-books, molasses, timothy-seed and a thousand other things were sold and all farm-produce bought; men crowded the particular stores that dealt exclusively in wet goods, for in those days the Prohibition movement had not yet even chipped its shell, and nobody thought harm of taking “a drop to keep the cold out,” or, mayhap, “another for sociability’s sake.”

The inn-yards were filled with family-sleighs, and around three sides of the court-house saddle-horses were tied to the hitching-rails as closely as they would stand without fighting. The keen,



still air was full of the creaking of sleigh-runners on the snow, the jingling of silvery-sounding bells, neighing of horses and shouts of salutation between acquaintances.

Presently the shrill sounds of a fife and the clatter of a drum awoke the echoes with a new sort of disturbance, and the musicians, followed by all the boys in town, marched the length of the main street and back again, to the "common," or great open square near the court-house, where the drilling was to take place. There, by the flag-pole, in all his awful dignity of cocked hat, crimson sash, and sword, fat Captain Ramsey stood, lists in hand, awaiting his citizen soldiery. From all directions they came flocking, in hot haste; and a motley-looking mob they were, so far as clothing went, no two seeming to be dressed alike. Tall and stalwart men they were, with lithe, vigorous frame, clear, daring eyes and firm tread; men who looked as if fatigue and fear would be alike strange to them. Here and there an old man, really exempt by age from military duty, yet scornful of such release, bore a shot-gun; but, with those few exceptions, the arms in the hands of all were the long, heavy, muzzle-loading squirrel rifle, a small-bored weapon, but one that would carry far and with splendid precision. Almost every man of Captain Ramsey's one hundred and seventeen would have been able, with his own gun, to hit a button on a soldier's breast as far as he could



see it clearly, particularly if that button should happen to be on a red coat.

All around the “Common” the big family sleighs were drawn up, and in them, comfortably wrapped in their robes and furs, the ladies sat, looking on and thrilled by that inexplicable fascination which military evolutions always seem to have for women. With them, to hold the horses when the martial music made them shiver and dance, sat the old men, whose weight of years forbade their active service on the training-ground, and who, involuntarily resenting that fact, were unsparing in sarcastic criticisms upon their envied juniors in the ranks. It gave them relief to say things like these :

“ Turn your toes out, Sam ! You walk like a pigeon !”

“ Will some lady please admire Mr. McPherson ?”

“ Step out there, Dave ? You stutter with both feet !”

To such bantering salutations the men addressed made lively responses in kind, and Captain Ramsey in vain made himself red shouting :

“ Silence in the ranks !”

But there were, also, pleasanter interchanges of regard than those—salutes and replies inaudible to the ears, but full of music to the heart. The young militiaman was rare, who did not know, or at least believe, that some fair spectator’s brightest smile of admiration had a directly



personal significance to him. John Cameron, for instance, felt his pulses thrill and his heart beat high at sight of Hetty Mulveil's sparkling eyes, full of love and pride, following him constantly; while she, seeing that he knew of and rejoiced in her presence and regard, flushed with happiness and bent upon him—as next he advanced toward her—a smile eloquent with tender affection.

Notwithstanding the profound convictions in the mind of every citizen-soldier present, that it did not really make the slightest difference whether a gun was carried on the right or the left shoulder, so long as it was kept handy for use; that it was “derved nonsense” to batter the butt of a rifle on the hard frozen ground for an “order arms;” and that marching and counter-marching, wheeling and alignment, were all matters of mere show and not at all essential to good fighting—they really went through the drill in a very creditable fashion; and Captain Ramsey had good reason for telling them, as he did before “breaking ranks,” that he was proud of them.

“Well,” remonstrated some of the men; “if we can do it so good already, what's the use of keeping us freezing our toes just to do it some more?”

“You wouldn't durst to talk back that way to General Scott, if he was drilling you,” retorted the captain, who lost no opportunity for reviving



the recollection that he had served in real war under that hero's command.

"Maybe so, but you ain't no General Scott," argued the men with cold feet.

He good-naturedly admitted the point well taken; and after announcing the usual "dress-parade" at three o'clock in the afternoon gave the order to "break ranks."

The American Eagle tavern—the principal house of entertainment in town—had more patrons at dinner that day than it could accommodate at one time, so, in compliance with established custom on such occasions, the first table was reserved for ladies, and, while they were dining, the men sought comfort elsewhere in places where it could be had in a fluid and promptly assimilable form. One of those places, despite the cold, was on an open lot, a little way above the tavern, where a thrifty citizen had built an attractive log-fire, and near it tapped a barrel of "heart-of-cider," of his own making.

"Now, this," exclaimed Uncle David Henderson, as he strolled up, spread himself before the blaze and stretched out his hand for a glass of the potent but seductive beverage, "is the sort of thing I admire. A good fire to warm the toes, a clean liquor of Nature's brewing to warm the heart, and all right out in the pure, open air. I poked my nose into McCloskey's, as I came along, looking for a friend, and I declare the



heat and the smoke and the vile smell of the liquor e'en a'most made me sick."

"It's a wonder to me," remarked a neighbor, touching glasses with Uncle David, "that young men find any pleasure in such nasty places. I'll be bound you weren't poisoned by the like when you were young, or you never would have grown to be the man you are."

Uncle David admitted that might be true, though, so far as he was aware, he had simply grown up big and strong because it was his nature to do so.

"Did you ever meet a man as strong as you are?"

"No; that he didn't, I'll be bound!" answered another for him, and a murmured chorus rumbled around the circle about the fire:

"'Taint likely!"

"Guess not!"

"Ain't but one Uncle Dave!"

"Uncle David" Henderson was one of the most famous of the early settlers of Western Pennsylvania, and all through that part of the country surprising legends are still current relating to his giant strength. He was an extraordinarily large man, his stature slightly exceeding six feet and four inches, but so admirable were his proportions that, unless chance favored comparisons with others, a stranger would not be likely to appreciate readily how enormous he was. He had a kindly face, blue eyes and very



soft, brown hair, well inclined to curl, that at this time was brightened, here and there, by threads of silver, and his round-cropped, close-curling beard was almost white. No better-tempered man lived, yet few had more frequent fights—if so might be termed the brief muscular exercises with which he saddened those who assailed him. No ill-feeling characterized the attacks upon him. Other big and strong men simply wanted to have it determined whether he was their physical superior or not. He never had to settle that question twice for the same man; but in a community that almost worshiped bodily prowess—a condition inseparable from frontier life, and one which persists long after the direct causes have passed away—its repetitions became monotonous.

On one occasion, while he was building the Venice court-house, as he sat dozing in the public-room of the little hotel where he boarded, after a long day of very hard work, a burly West Virginian presented himself and persisted in waking him up. Bystanders shook their heads and said it was ill-advised; Uncle Dave had been handling and hauling stone all day, was tired and mightn't like it. But the stranger was troubled with the same old question.

“Git up 'n' fight!” he shouted, shaking the drowsy giant. “I've heard of you 'way down in the Panhandle, 'n' 've come up to give you a tussle 'n see who 's best man.”



"Just say you are and let me alone. I'm no fighter, and I'm tired and sleepy. G' 'way!" protested Uncle David.

"Whoopee!" yelled the Panhandler, jumping up and cracking his heels together. "I'm a wolf! I'm a catamount! I'm a bull! Come 'n' feel of my teeth! Come 'n' ride on my horns! Nobody can lick me! Whoopee!" And he dealt Uncle David a sounding smack on one of his placid cheeks.

Just how it happened he never afterward could tell, but the rash man's first sensation was of being poised in the air, up near the ceiling; the next, of flying through space, as if he had been shot from a catapult; then of a fearful crash and darkness and the fading away of all things. When consciousness returned, he stiffly struggled to his feet, hobbled to the door, and only pausing long enough to remark: "Gen'l'men, a dern fool is gwine back to the Panhandle of West Virginny," passed out into the night and was gone. Uncle David had hurled him, as a strong boy might a ball, against a wall full twenty feet away. Then he sat down and dozed again.

On the present occasion, the already reported conversation among the group of friends and neighbors about the "heart-of-cider" barrel naturally led to drawing Uncle David out, to show something of what he could do, and, upon the pretext of a trifling wager, he was led to



perform a feat that is still talked of in Washington County and has been unsuccessfully attempted since by thousands of other strong men.

Not more than a quarter of liquor, the owner said, had been drawn out of the barrel, so that the weight of the heavy package and its contents could hardly have been less than three hundred pounds. Grasping the chimb, or beveled ridge made by the ends of the staves, which afforded only a treacherous hold for the ends of his fingers, he, without any apparent difficulty, lifted the barrel out of the sleigh, in which it had been standing, and set it down before him in the snow, to have its bung removed. When that had been done, he grasped it again, as before, lifted it easily and gracefully to the height of his lips, said, in a leisurely, unconstrained way: “Here’s to you, boys!” and, placing the bung-hole to his mouth, took a deliberate drink therefrom, after which he set it lightly back upon its former place in the sleigh.

After a brief pause of stupefied astonishment, the witnesses of the astounding feat simultaneously united in a shout of applause.

Just about the same moment a very different sort of shout was raised, at the other end of the town, in the offensive “McCloskey’s” mentioned by Uncle David.

Simeon Mulveil had adhered to his malevolent plan for bringing disgrace upon John Cameron.



The county paper fully realized his expectations. Silver spoons, bearing the initials of Mrs. R. W. Billings, had been stolen, nine or ten weeks before, from that lady's house, on the Canonsburg turnpike; and silver spoons marked "R. W. B." were on John's table, practically in his possession, the day of the frolic. That was enough to justify a warrant. The constable knew very well that nothing could be more wildly improbable than that John Cameron should be a thief; but he said to himself, doggedly:

"If he's innocent, let him prove it."

With the warrant in his pocket, he gloated over the anticipated triumph of his hate and waited for "Training Day."

But it was hardly so easy as he had expected it would be, on that occasion, to find a safe opportunity for making the arrest. John's fondness for ill-smelling saloons seemed to be no greater than his uncle's, and, either to enjoy the pure air or to catch occasional glimpses of Hetty, he kept upon the street, generally surrounded by a band of sturdy Cameronian friends. Eventually, however, a little after dinner, he yielded to the persuasions of an acquaintance, who wanted him to "go and have one drink," and together they sauntered into the bar-room nearest at hand. It happened to be McCloskey's. Had one thought of the old feud recurred to John's mind, he would probably have shunned



the place, not for fear's sake, but from dislike, for it had always been, as it was now, the chief haunt of the Mulveil faction. But to him the feud had become a thing of the remote past, never recalled except when somebody reminded him of it. Seen in the magic light of his love for Hetty, Mulveils looked to him like brothers, and, so far as he was concerned, the hatchet had been buried. But McCloskey's was a bad place to nurture that kindly spirit in a Cameron. The unimproved Mulveils were still there, in strong force. Indeed, of all the boisterous, semi-inebriated crowd thronging the groggery, but one other man was a Cameron, and his presence was about as accidental as John's.

Just as John raised from the bar a glass of cider that he had ordered, Constable Mulveil clutched his shoulder and shouted, in a tone to attract general attention:

“I arrest you, in the name of the law!”

The score of voices that an instant before had been declaiming, wrangling, laughing and shouting were suddenly hushed to perfect silence.

“Arrest me! What for?” demanded the young man, more amazed than anybody else.

“For bein' a d——d thief!” shouted Rufus Goldie, secretly anxious to precipitate a conflict, in which a deadly injury might be covertly inflicted, under a plea of legal justification, upon his successful rival.

Hardly had the words left his lips, when quick



as lightning, John dashed the glass and cider into his face, temporarily blinding him, and, at the same time, with his left hand, floored Simeon, who went down yelling :

“Mulveils! Help, Mulveils!”

His voice awoke a very pandemonium. The old faction spirit flamed up, like tow touched by fire. Yells, curses, threats, the sounds of blows, the smashing of bottles and the grinding of glass under trampling feet, made an infernal uproar. John, stoutly backed by the friend who entered with him and the solitary Cameron already there, fought nobly, but the odds against the trio were overwhelming. A score of savage Mulveils, all who could get near enough to do so, attacked them at once; while as many more, close behind, yelled threats and execrations, hurled missiles at their purposed victims, and were ready to spring into the front row of attack as those before them were felled. Using a heavy stool as a weapon John piled Mulveil about him in heaps, but brave, strong and desperate as he was, could not maintain more than a few moments longer such a fearfully unequal combat. His friend, who was nearest the door, fought his way out, and, covered with blood, ran staggeringly up the street shouting the old battle cry :

“Camerons! Camerons to the rescue!”

When he reached Uncle David he cried to him :



“They are killing John Cameron in McCloskey’s!”

Quick and terrible in his sudden wrath the giant sprang to his feet and without a word started at a rapid walk for the scene of conflict. His heavy rifle was gripped in his left hand and his friends, fearing he would do a score of murders if he went into a fight with that weapon—even though he used it only as a club—laid hold of it and of him, crying:

“Leave the gun, Uncle David! Leave the gun!”

A dozen of them together so tried to hold him, but setting his jaws together tightly, and with his eyes blazing he strode on, not seeming even to observe what they were doing. And the terror of his coming flew ahead of him, so that fleeing Mulveil’s shrieked into McCloskey’s, as they darted by:

“Run! Save yourselves! Uncle Dave is coming!”

Camerons, flocking from all directions at the war-cry, asked no questions and made no parley, but fell straightway upon every Mulveil in sight. Speedily the fighting was general over one-half the town, and the roar of combat was like that upon a hard fought battle-field save that there was no sound of fire-arms. Strangely enough, though the combatants were frenzied with rage, sometimes in desperate straits and frequently had loaded guns in their hands all



through the strife, not a single shot was fired, and though there were many broken limbs and bruised skulls, no one was shot or murdered. That fate, however, would have befallen John Cameron, had his rescue depended solely upon Uncle David and his Cameron brethren.

Hetty Mulveil happened to be in the street and to hear, before it reached Uncle David, that alarming cry :

“They’re killing John Cameron in McCloskey’s !”

Without an instant’s hesitation she ran to her lover’s aid and fearlessly plunged into the murderous conflict about him. In ten seconds more, she would have been too late.

The second Cameron had disappeared among the unconscious Mulveils strewing the floor, and John stood alone, with his foes closing thickly around him, wounding each other by the eager ferocity of their blows at him. Still he wielded the heavy stool, and, wherever it fell, an arm dropped disabled, or a man tumbled headlong with a bruised skull, but the end was plainly near. He was too much exhausted to evade blows, and gradually they were beating him down ; his breath came in hoarse gasps ; blood from a gash in his forehead ran into his eyes and blinded him ; yet he fought desperately to keep his feet, knowing well that to fall was to lose hope.

As Hetty sprang into the door, a man knocked senseless by one of John’s wild sweeps of the



stool, fell against her, dropping into her arms the rifle with which he had been endeavoring to brain her lover. She seized the gun and held it, while slipping on one side to let him tumble to the floor, where he lay quiet. No one seemed to notice her advent, and for a moment she stood irresolute, hardly able to see anything clearly in that semi-obscurity, into which she had so suddenly come from the brilliant sunlight outside. Then her overstrained senses seemed to intensify her powers of perception, and she saw with inexpressible horror, and more clearly as it seemed to her than by mere natural vision, death hovering over her lover.

A heavy iron weight, hurled by some cowardly miscreant behind him, struck the back of his head and sent him plunging forward, senseless, with wide-stretched hands, face downward to the floor. At that moment came the warning yell from a fleeing Mulveil at the door:

“Run! Save yourselves! Uncle Dave is coming!”

The wolves did not wait to mangle their quarry, but struck by sudden terror, dashed to the street and fled away; all save one, Rufus Goldie. He had been keeping himself as safe as possible, on the outer edge of the fray, waiting for such an opportunity as this, and now sprang forward with a shout of triumph, swinging an axe above his head. But before he could bury its blade in the brain of the helpless man prone



before him, his infernal joy was blighted. Love was swifter than hate. Strong as an Amazon and quick as a panther, Hetty delivered a crushing blow upon his right shoulder with a rifle that had so providentially fallen into her hands, and he staggered backward with a scream of pain, as his shattered arm fell to his side.

“Cowardly murderers!” the girl cried, swinging the rifle to strike again.

With an oath he jumped to the door to escape, reaching it only in time to meet Uncle David, who floored him by one of those mighty blows the giant so seldom trusted himself to strike.

Hetty dropped upon one knee and raised her lover in her strong arms to a sitting posture. The sight of his sad plight quite overcame her.

“Oh, my love—my darling! They have killed you!” she moaned, sobbing, and kissing him.

Uncle David brought in a handful of snow, which he applied to his brow and temples.

Slowly his consciousness returned, and without any vague mental wanderings, such as might well have been expected; for his first feeble words were:

“If this isn’t a dream, I’m in big luck. Kiss me again, Hetty, if it’s real.”





## CHAPTER XIII.

### SCORE ONE FOR JOHN AND HETTY.

Constable Mulveil's fine scheme had come utterly to naught. His assistant Goldie's collar bone and shoulder had been so mashed that it was feared he would be somewhat crippled for life. He himself had been so mauled that it was at first doubtful if he would recover, and a fortnight in bed had not altogether made him well. The Mulveil's had been thoroughly whipped in the finest faction fight that had occurred in years, and, for it all, there was no offset in injury to John Cameron. The young fellow's hurts had been almost cured by Hetty's kisses even before Uncle David led him away from McCloskey's; and as for the stain that was to have been put upon his good name—it had not stuck. The arrest was so far a failure that nobody seemed to remember that it had been seriously intended or attempted. Goldie's epithet was recollected only as a foul insult meant to provoke a fight, not as an expression of anything that could possibly have been intended as an allegation of a



fact. Taken all in all, "Training Day" had turned out very badly for the Mulveil interest, so far as the constable could see; and he felt a good deal of reluctance about making another attempt to serve that warrant.

Simeon had not the satisfaction of knowing it, but in one way the events of "Training Day" had wrought grievously for John and Hetty. The fight had roused up all the Mulveil fire latent in her mother's breast. Had peace maintained between the factions, it is altogether probable that Mrs. Mulveil eventually would have grumblingly, but without active opposition, seen her daughter courted and even married by a well-to-do Cameron, and, when matters had gone so far, danced at their wedding with right goodwill. But such hopes were not to be thought of now, when the feud blazed again and the Mulveils had been whipped.

"Them Camerons will be walking all over us and wanting to hang their hats on the horns of the moon, now," she declared, "but a Cameron hat shall never find a nail in my house again. Three times now, that John Cameron has been here after you, Hetty, and if he comes the fourth, I'll scald him. I wonder you can sit there and look me in the face after what you have done. Surely he must have bewitched you. But twice he has sat up with you, the last time only the Sunday night before the fight, after you making a monkey of the decent man who is kin to the



Mulveils. And yet you go fighting for him; against your own people, too. What would your father say, if he could see you now, I'd like to know?"

"If my father were alive, he would be ashamed of me if I wouldn't fight to prevent the cowardly murder of a helpless man, whether friend or foe."

"H-m! Well, I don't say: 'No' altogether to that. When you saw a thing like that about to be done, of course I wouldn't blame you for stopping it, if you could; but what business had you to be there to see it? Why must you poke your nose into the men's fighting among themselves?"

"To save John Cameron's life."

"Well—all right; you saved it—though there's neither luck nor grace in a girl fighting against her own people. But—you saved it. And now let that be the end of your colloquing with him. Let me hear no more of your John Cameron. If he comes here again, as I told you before, I'll scald him—and you may speak to him just the once more to tell him so."

Hetty knew her mother was in earnest, and that it would be useless to attempt argument with her, so said nothing in reply; but if Mrs. Mulveil imagined that her dictum put an end to that love affair, she was never more mistaken in her life.

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John Cameron of course had to be informed of Mrs. Mulveil's uncompromising hostility, but it did not seem to depress his spirits greatly.

"That's all right," he said, complacently. "If she takes any comfort in feeling that way, I have no objection. In fact, I think it is rather fortunate she comes out so flat-footed about it, for now you see, Hetty, there is nothing for us but to go right off and get married. Your idea of waiting until spring will not do at all under these circumstances. You see that?"

But Hetty did not quite "see that." She hesitated at a conclusive revolt against and casting off of the accustomed trammels of maternal authority. It took time to convince her that her mother was not, and under no probable circumstances ever would be, amenable to reason in the matter of John Cameron. And until that had been established beyond question in her mind, her meetings with John were necessarily clandestine, infrequent and unsatisfactory. They saw each other at church and spelling-school, but she did not venture to permit him to accompany her home from either—or hardly even speak to her.

That they ever had opportunities for exchange of those weighty trifles and important nothings that lovers find it so necessary to say and so sweet to hear was almost wholly due to Danny. John had given him that promised gun, and the imp's gratitude was as unbounded as his joy.



John's generosity had quite won his heart, and made his service in the lovers' behalf active, energetic and continuous. It was only necessary for his sister to say to him: "Danny, I'm going over this afternoon to Aunt Eliza's," or "to Mrs. Plotts," or to some other neighbor's, and the chances were ten to one that, either in going or returning, she would encounter John Cameron. But the season was against open-air courtship. Cupid in great-coat, fur-cap and overshoes is little like himself as lovers know him. John, being a decidedly practical young man, did not take kindly to divorcing love and comfort to suit the whim of any old woman.

"Don't get your back up at my saying so, Hetty," he would argue, "but it is derved nonsense for you and me to wade around knee deep in the snow, getting snufflier every day, when we might just as well be sitting cosily by our own fireside, in our own home, leaving those who don't like it to do the wading and snuffling around outside to their heart's content."

The impression was growing gradually stronger in Hetty's mind that John was about right.

Their only really comfortable interviews were at the house of Mrs. Davis—the distant neighbor whom Hetty had been visiting on the day she rescued John from his perch on a knob of the Devil's Backbone. That good woman intuitively grasped the situation upon the occasion



of the young couple's first apparently accidental meeting in her presence, and thereafter, if the course of their true love did not run smoothly, the fault was not hers. During hours at a time she would leave them alone together in her cosy sitting-room, while she busied herself with household duties in the kitchen, singing like a lark for sheer sympathetic happiness of heart, and keeping a sharp lookout on the lane, to see that nobody came to surprise them.

But that was all too good to last. Mrs. Mulveil looked with suspicion upon the great intimacy that seemed to have suddenly sprung up between Hetty and Mrs. Davis.

"I don't see," she said querulously to Mary Elder, "for what she wants to ride over there two or maybe three times in a week. I'll be bound it's no 'Rose of Sharon' or 'Liberty Tree' quilting patterns she does be going after all the time. And the easy way she takes it about that John Cameron not being let come snooping around here, isn't natural. It wouldn't surprise me a mite if she met him over there, and I'm just going to find out the first time she goes to Mrs. Davis's again. But don't you tell her I said so."

"No ; I will not," promised Mary.

And she did not. But that evening, when she and Hetty were sitting together by the kitchen fire, Mary, affecting an air of mystery and pre-



tending fear of being overheard, said, in an impressive whisper :

“ I was looking at a book of Danny’s to-day—the one about birds and beasts—and came across something that I do not believe.”

Hetty, who was no thick-witted girl, unable to take a hint, comprehended readily that she was to look for a meaning under the mere words which, in themselves, were certainly not of so incendiary a character as to demand such caution in their utterance. But she simply replied, with a glance of intelligence :

“ I should think so. I’ve read that book myself. What was it, dear ?”

“ It says that when the ostrich is pursued by hunters, it sticks its foolish head into a pile of sand, imagines itself then entirely covered from sight, and lies there quietly until its pursuers come and seize it. Do you think it can be true that there is any bird so simple ?”

“ No, I don’t,” answered Hetty, promptly, with her eyes snapping as she leaned over close to her friend’s ear and whispered with emphasis : “ Nor any girl, either—about here !”

The next time Hetty rode over to Mrs. Davis’s to get some points about a peculiarly intricate pattern on which her heart was set—Danny started out a good hour before her to go squirrel-hunting—Mrs. Mulveil offered no objection to her daughter paying the visit, and did not even notice the disappearance of the erratic



Danny, who went and came with his gun as he pleased; but an hour after Hetty rode off the old woman saddled another horse and followed.

John Cameron, by appointment made at their last preceding meeting, was waiting at Mrs. Davis's for his true-love, when she arrived and breathlessly told him she was almost afraid to come over for fear her mother would be upon her heels at any minute.

"How could she know of our meeting here?" asked the young man.

"I don't think she knows, but I am sure, from something Mary Elder said to me, that she suspects, and if she does, she will do her best to find out. Danny is in the bushes by the road at the edge of the woods, and will fire two shots if she comes along, so as to give time for you to get out of the way; and I guess there is not much danger of her catching us, but it does make me feel awful nervous."

"And it makes me feel consarned mean to be dodging and hiding in this way. I tell you what it is, Hetty: If we are to be chased out of here, that settles it. I'll be a sufferin' lamb no longer for any old woman under the broad canopy. Which do you think you'd prefer to live with the rest of your life—your mother or me?"

"Why, what a question, John! You know well enough. I love my mother; but if I have to give up anybody, it will not be you, John."



“Then, if she follows you here to-day, off we go to-morrow. What do you say?”

“I’m not saying anything, John.”

“And I’m talking for two?”

“I guess you are, John.”

Seizing her impulsively in his embrace and kissing her, he exclaimed:

“I’m the happiest fellow in the Keystone State, my darling, and I hope to thunder she comes. But it’s clearly understood that, whether she does now or waits for another occasion, her appearance shall be the signal for you becoming Mrs. John Cameron the next day?”

“Isn’t that just a little—a little sudden, John?”

“The more sudden it is, the less chance is given for anybody anticipating and interfering with it.”

While they were still engaged in providently laying their plans to meet the probable contingencies of the near future, Mrs. Davis, who had been left watching in the kitchen, suddenly put her plump, good-natured face in at the sitting-room door, calling to them:

“Two shots have just been fired, Hetty; by Danny, I guess. If so, she’ll be here in a minute, and we’ve got no time to lose. John, snatch them horses out of the bed-room. Push that stand back, Hetty, and get hold of the end there. Don’t let it come loose on the big one.”

While she rapidly gave her orders, the young man quickly brought out and set up the two tall



trestles, locally known as "horses," upon which the women lifted the quilting-frame—previously rolled up and laid on the floor along the wall—and pegged it out so as to expose a generous expanse of the elaborate patch-work stretched upon it. Then Mrs. Davis considerately withdrew, to see if Mrs. Mulveil was really coming, but almost instantly re-appeared, exclaiming:

"Law, sakes! If she isn't at the gate already! And she's 'lighting down to open it herself. Up with you, John. She wants to surprise us, and we musn't let her do it."

John laughingly scrambled up a ladder pendent straight against the wall, and disappeared, through a square open trap in the slab ceiling. Then, detaching the ladder from its hooks, he drew it up into the loft with him.

Mrs. Davis and Hetty, taking seats on opposite sides of the quilting-frame, appeared to be gravely occupied with the intricacies of that overpoweringly magnificent but exceptionally difficult pattern known as "the Mexican Pi'ny and Cypress-and-Star Border;" presenting a tableau so innocent and undeserving of suspicion that when Mrs. Mulveil abruptly opened the door and entered upon it, she blushed for her error and precipitancy.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### CUPID'S SURPRISE.

It was hard for Hetty, when she and Mary nestled close before the fire that evening for their customary long sympathetic talk and when, afterward, they retired to bed together, to restrain herself from telling the important step she contemplated taking on the morrow. But the secret was not wholly her own, and she feared to intrust it to the chances of the little old maid's involuntary betrayal. The only person to whom she could talk frankly about it was Danny, whose coöperation was, to a certain extent, necessary in the plan John had formed, and whose willingness to render it was simply enthusiastic.

"You," she said to him, "want to get down to the bend of the road, by the big walnut-tree, real early in the morning and wait there until John comes along in his cutter. The minute you see him, fire two shots, close together, just as you did to-day. That is all you have to do."

"And what 'll you be doing?"



“Running for dear life.”

Danny reflected and shook his head dubiously.

“Gals can’t run,” he said contemptuously, “’cause they wear frocks. Mam’ll catch you, sure, and I sort of don’t want to fill her full of shot ’thout I have to.”

“Why, Danny! You awful boy! The idea of anybody ever wanting you to do such a thing!”

“Well, didn’t I tell you I don’t like to, myself? But, say! I’ve got the idea of what you want. Laudanum, you know, puts people to sleep. Now, there’s a bottle of horse liniment in the barn, that’s chock full of laudanum. Bill Taylor says he can smell it; and if we’d chuck that into mam—”

“Danny! Oh, you’ll surely get yourself hanged some day! If you don’t promise me that you will not do anything to mother, I’ll not run away at all. Why, how do you know but that you might half kill her, giving her things like that? And then, how would you feel, you wicked boy?”

“How I’d feel. Well, sorry, I s’pose. But how do you s’pose John’ll feel if this scheme busts up? He’s just dead set on getting you, though I’m sure I don’t see why, when he’s got the pick of the girls in the township?”

“That will do now, Danny. You will know more about such things when you get to be older.



All you have to do now is just what John says, and if things don't turn out right, it will not be your fault."

Danny did not dispute that proposition, but it was plain to be seen he took a gloomy view of the probable outcome of a job of mischief not personally engineered by himself, and would have been quite willing to assume the responsibility of running the elopement in ways that would have been a terror to parents and guardians.

Very little sleep did Hetty Mulveil get that night; not because she was a feather-headed fool-girl, half-crazed by the delicious excitement of a prospective elopement, but by reason of her being a good, sensible one, who realized that she was about to take a very serious step—one, in all probability, irrevocable and weighted with all her life's destiny. It is not necessary that an intelligent, reasoning maiden shall, under such circumstances, feel a distrust of her lover to set her gravely pondering upon what may be hidden behind the veil of the future. He is but one factor in the problem with which fate confronts her, though, it must be admitted, a very important one. The wisest foresight is only good guesswork; in every darkness danger lurks, and love alone, whatever the poets may say, will not lighten the obscurity of the next hour of our existence. Fate never ceases tempting and compelling us. Every moment of life is fraught with



infinite potentialities, and according as we vivify those moments with earnestness of purpose and intensity of action, so we wake those latent forces into active being and give to their control the helm of our destiny.

The girl got into a condition of nervous wakefulness, with thinking, hoping and fearing.

"Come!" she said to herself at length. "I shall positively get no sleep at all, and will look like an owl to-morrow, if I don't drive John and marrying and all that clean out of my head. I wonder if counting the clock-ticks would put me to sleep? It does some people, I've heard. One, two, three, four— How strangely loud they are! Everything sounds louder at night, I suppose. I wonder if Mary Elder knows that she snores—just a little bit? One, two, three— I wonder if I snore? And if I do, what will John say if he ever finds it out? Pshaw! Why can't I stop thinking about John? One, two— Oh! Twelve o'clock! Well, if this isn't the longest night! I wonder if John is lying awake, too? There it is again! 'John!' 'John!' Always John. I wonder what makes the light of so many colors? Every time the fire flares up there is a little ribbon, of the color of gold, under the door; and the moonlight on the wall is as white and cold as the snow; and the light in John's eyes is blue. Bother John's eyes! I wish I could go to sleep. How can a body sleep when there are so many noises? I don't believe there



ever were so many noises about this house before. Let me count. There's the clock makes three kinds: ticking, a wheezy whiz when it's going to strike and striking. Then there are the crickets. I don't believe they make that noise with their hind-legs, whatever the natural-history book may say. And that mouse is gnawing away again. Of course, Danny has forgotten to set the trap. To-morrow night, I'll—no, I won't—I'll be away with John. There it is! John again. Everything comes 'round to John. Oh, this won't do at all. One, two, three, four, five! Good gracious! What a crack that was! I wonder why timber snaps so in cold weather. John said he had got all the timber out for a new house, and we would live at his mother's until it is put up. I wonder if she will like me. If she doesn't, I shall be awfully lonesome when John is not about. One, two, three, four, five, six—"

So she fought the night through until the clock struck four, when she thought she might venture to get up without astonishing the family too profoundly. Her dressing had been carefully planned beforehand. The gown would, of course, have to be the ordinary every-day brown merino. A better one, such as she would have liked to wear when going anywhere with John, would certainly provoke her mother's vigilant suspicions. But the old lady, luckily, would not see with what care she had dressed underneath, to



secure comfort on the long, cold drive before her. Her warmly wadded, fur-trimmed cloak, cherry-tinted knitted hood, white woolen "muffler," thick mittens and fur-lined overshoes she rolled in a tight bundle and hid in a dark corner of the summer-kitchen, near the back door. All these preparations had been made before Mrs. Mulveil even noticed that her daughter was moving about the house.

Then Hetty busied herself getting breakfast. Soon the tempting odors of hot coffee and frying ham tickled Danny's nose, up in the loft, and for once he came tumbling down-stairs in a hurry, without having to be rolled out of bed or even called—an almost unprecedented thing. And so eager was he to get off with his gun—"squirrel-hunting," he said, but with a sly wink at Hetty—that he would hardly wait to snatch a hasty breakfast.

The hired man came in. He was going to take a load of grain to the mill that morning and could not get an early breakfast at home, because his wife was sick. Hetty sat him down at the table and began dipping the buckwheat batter from its crock to the smoking griddle, for cakes. By the time he was through eating, Mary Elder and Mrs. Mulveil were up. The latter felicitated herself upon seeing the hired man before he started. She fancied that she had felt some premonitory twinges of rheumatism and wanted him to be sure to get for her, from the miller, a bot-



tle of black-snake oil. He said he would not forget and went away. Hetty put upon the table a tall pile of golden-brown buckwheat cakes, and the three women sat down.

The meal was little more than half over, when the girl's sharp ears caught the sound of two gun-shots, close together; at a distance, but clear. Neither of the others noticed them.

"There!" she exclaimed. "I have forgotten again to set water on for the dishes," and, rising from the table which was in the kitchen, took up the kettle to place it upon the stove.

It was empty—as she had taken care it should be. She turned to the water-pail; it, too, was empty. Taking it up, as if going to the well, she passed out of the back door, which she closed behind her. Her mother and Mary were deep in discussion of the advisability of "turning" a certain blue cashmere that had already seen much service. But, after some minutes, the old woman exclaimed petulantly:

"Why don't that girl come and finish her breakfast? Hetty! Hetty!"

There was no response. At that precise moment Hetty was already two hundred yards away from the house, with her bundle in her arms, flying down the lane as if an angry bull had been behind her.

After a time, Mrs. Mulveil broke forth again:

"Her coffee is getting cold and them buckwheats will be like leather. Hetty! Hetty!"



Getting no reply she arose, went to the back door, looked out and repeated her call, loudly, but in vain.

By that time Hetty was in John Cameron's cutter, out of sight, beyond the bend in the road, doing the best she could with nervous fingers and her lover's rather awkward help, to bundle herself up comfortably in the warm wraps she had not dared to wait to put on until now.

"Where are we going, John?" she asked anxiously.

"To the turnpike, first. There our track will be lost. Then, if they chase us, they will not know whether we have struck out for Nobles-town, Canonsburg, or Washington, and, as they will hardly be likely to think we have started off in this way for Pittsburg, we will get an everlasting start on them while they are puzzling."

When Mrs. Mulveil had repeated her call two or three times, she noticed the door of the summer-kitchen open, observed the water-pail dropped in the snow near by, and suspicion flashed, with the suddenness of an explosion, into her mind. Without a word she wheeled, and darted into Hetty's bedroom. From there, a howl of angry dismay quickly proclaimed that she had made a discovery: Hetty's warm wraps, as well as the girl herself were missing, and the old woman shrewdly guessed the truth.

"Hetty has run away with that John Cameron!" she shrieked, rushing back to the kitchen.



Mary Elder, leisurely enjoying her buckwheat-cakes and honey, was almost paralyzed by amazement, and could only weakly gasp :

“ Oh, no, Mrs. Mulveil ! You don't think so ? ”

“ Don't I ? Well, I do ! And, what's more, I know she has. I'd lay my life on it ! ”

“ Why, she never even hinted to me that she had a thought of such a thing. I should think she would have told me. ”

“ Oh, no ! Not she ! Of course not ! She was smart enough for keeping her mouth to herself, and with him putting her up to it. And to think I didn't see anything out of the way with her ! I might have known there was some deviltry in her getting up so mortal early this morning. But she needn't think she is going to get away so mighty easy. Danny ! Hi, Danny ! ”

“ Danny's gone to shoot squirrels. ”

“ So he has ; and I'd forgot it. This trouble drove it out of my head. I'll have to ride the mare. Consarn the boy ! No day would do him to go hunting but this day, of all the days in the year ! ”

“ Why, Mrs. Mulveil, Danny goes hunting every day ! ”

“ Yah ! So he does. Well, I'll go do some hunting myself. I'm ready, now. ”

Mrs. Mulveil had not wasted a minute in her talking, for she was a woman of action ; and while her tongue ran on, she had been busily preparing herself to pursue the lovers. Fully



dressed now for the road, it took her but a few minutes to saddle the bay mare and promptly she set out at a gallop for Cousin Simeon's. His kinship and constabulary authority, she seemed to think, would make him her most effective ally in this emergency, but how much stronger her confidence would have been had she known that his energies would be inspired by an infinitely more powerful feeling—that of ferocious jealousy.

Simeon and Rufus were both at the saw-mill, putting in a new log-car, when she reined up at the door, with a loud, impatient—

“Hi! There!”

In a few vigorous words she told her startling news; Hetty had run away with John Cameron!

Rufus did most of the audible swearing, but Simeon's face was hard-set and white with a passion deeper than words could vent. The constable hated his successful rival, as a Cameron; as a man who had defied his authority and whipped him; as his superior in every manly grace and attribute; and finally as the winner of the fair prize upon which he had fixed his heart's desire. Yes; he was the right man to enlist for the pursuit of the lovers. He still had that warrant in his possession and now it would be worth while taking all probable risks to effect its service. It was as a fugitive from justice that he would hunt John Cameron down; not as a lover eloping with his sweetheart. Of course, under



existing circumstances, the young fellow would be certain to resist arrest. At least, it was to be hoped he would. And if he did? Well, a constable in the discharge of his duty could legally take such extreme measures to enforce his authority and uphold the dignity of the law as would never be sanctioned in an ordinary citizen interfering, however properly, in another's love affair. The idea suggested by Rufus during their ride to church was by no means a bad one.

It must not be supposed that Simeon permitted himself to put into audible words anything of these thoughts turbulently rolling through his mind. He was much too cautious for that.

"We'll do all we can for you, to bring Hetty back," he said to Mrs. Mulveil and that was all.

While Rufus hurriedly hitched a team to the two-horse sleigh, put in the robes and secured a bottle of rum for consumption *en route*, Simeon, in the tool-room of the mill, gave his exclusive attention to the careful loading of his revolver, which was one of the old "pepper-box" kind, but a sufficiently deadly weapon at close quarters.

Within half an hour, the pursuers started, and when she had seen them off, Mrs. Mulveil jogged away home in a much more contented and hopeful frame of mind.

She had sent Murder to hunt down Love.





## CHAPTER XV.

### JOHN AND HETTY ESCAPE.

A light snow had fallen during the night, and on the comparatively little-travelled country road the lovers first took there was no difficulty in following the track of John's cutter. But on the turnpike it was quickly lost among the multiplicity of others. Only from the direction it took in emerging from the road—turning towards the left—it appeared that they had gone to Washington. But, after driving half an hour, the pursuers met a man coming from Washington, who said that he had seen no cutter with a man and a girl in it on the road that day. They went back to where the trail entered upon the 'pike, and, by more careful and acute observation than they had employed before, found now that John had cunningly driven a few hundred yards toward Washington, and then retraced his course and gone in the direction of Canonsburg.

He had evidently calculated upon the possi-



bility of what had occurred and his trick had cost his pursuers nearly an hour and a half of valuable time. The consciousness of having been so easily outwitted still further enraged Simeon Mulveil, and he lashed his horses into a gallop.

The fortunate accident of meeting a man who knew Cameron and had recognized him, with a girl, in a cutter, on the road to Pittsburg, saved the constable from a vain chase to Canonsburg, and enabled him, though still far in the rear, to gain ground steadily in the pursuit from that time on.

John Cameron, confident of having baffled his possible pursuers and dreaming naught of the danger now following swiftly, was wildly happy in possession of the greatest joy and triumph of his life. Hetty, nestled close under his arm, so bundled up that only her sparkling eyes, the blossomy roundness of her cheeks and the tip of her little nose appeared amid her mufflings, in submission to his insistence uncovered her lips "just for a moment;" and the moment was so long that the big black horse felt the neglected reins lying loosely upon his back, and intoxicated by exultation in his own vigor and the inspiring freshness of the morning breeze, took the bit between his teeth and galloped madly away with the speed of the wind, his bells sounding a pæan of rejoicing. That was on the country turnpike; there was no such good going on the Pittsburg road.



It had been badly cut up by heavy teaming during a recent thaw, and the snow-fall of the preceding night had only partly concealed and not filled the deep ruts and holes in the frozen ground. Added to that, when the sun was well up, the snow was softened just enough to "ball" constantly under the black horse's feet and worry him. Consequently, the travel was slower than John had anticipated, and it was the middle of the afternoon when he found himself descending the long, steep side-hill above Temperanceville and saw Pittsburg, across the Monongahela River, before him. But that did not trouble him. Anybody in pursuit would have had the same difficulties to encounter, and he had a good enough start to free him from anxiety about the result of a chase. Besides, his gaol was in sight; the victory practically won.

The little ferry-boat—propelled by horsepower—had been laid up for the season, and since then all crossing of the river was upon the ice. So thick and strong was this natural bridge that enormous wagons laden with coal, and each drawn by four huge horses, had crossed it in almost a continuous procession between the mines of Coal Hill and the city, day after day for weeks, without causing its glassy floor to even crack; but it was no longer so secure. Successive snow-falls had "made it rotten," and river-men affirmed that the swift current of the stream had "cut it away on the under side," so



that now, though still perfectly safe for pedestrians, only rather venturesome persons drove horses upon it. Those who did drive across followed a curving course almost like a great letter S, that led from the ferry landing on the South-Pittsburg side to the city wharf near "the Point," that way having been carefully picked out by sounding where the ice was yet thickest and strongest.

The day watchman of the ferry company, smoking his pipe on the bank as John drove down by him, warned him, as he did all who seemed to be strangers.

"The ice isn't just as safe as it has been."

"But they are still crossing on it," answered John, argumentatively. "There is a cutter just starting to come across from Pittsburg, now."

"Oh, yes. They do. And they will, until somebody breaks through and is drowned, I suppose, as they do every winter. I don't say it isn't safe enough yet, for a single horse and cutter if you are careful; but you 'll have to look out that you don't get off the curving track that is marked out. There are thin patches inside the bends, both ways, where it wouldn't be safe for a man to go afoot, let alone drive a horse."

"Thank you heartily for the caution," replied the young man, gathering up his reins, "I 'll stick to the road and go fast."

"That 's the safest way."

And fast John did go. Whether the black



horse was inspired by the novelty of trotting upon so level a floor, and feeling the cutter hardly a feather's weight behind him, or whether he was conscious that there was danger in giving the ice time to crack under him, none may say, but whatever the cause, he went across well inside a three-minute gait. He was still slowly mounting the steep, deeply rutted road from the river into the city, when a two-horse sleigh, with two men in it, dashed across the bridge over Saw-Mill Run from Temperanceville into South Pittsburg and down the slope to the ferry landing.

There the faithful watchman halted them, to repeat the warning he had given to John Cameron a few minutes before.

"You 'd better not go out on the ice with that double-team!" he cried to them.

"Why not?"

"The ice may not hold you. It has been getting weaker for several days past, and heavy teams don't chance it any more."

While he was speaking, the cutter John had remarked starting from Pittsburg reached the bank and came slowly up.

"He seems to have come across all right," argued Simeon Mulveil, who was one of the men in the sleigh, jerking his head toward the man in the cutter.

"Oh, yes. But there's only one of him and one horse."





CROSSING THE MONONGAHELA ICE-BRIDGE.— See Chapter XV.







"How's the ice?" shouted Rufus Goldie to the lonely driver.

"Good enough, I guess," the man replied, with an air of indifference, stopping to let his horse rest a little.

"Did it crack much?"

"Not that I noticed, only about the middle, where I met a cutter going the other way, and the double weight made it holler some."

"Did that cutter have a young man and a girl in it?" demanded Simeon, eagerly.

"Yes."

With an oath and without waiting for any further information or hearing the warning cried after him to "stick to the road," Simeon gave his horses the lash, and they plunged down the bank and out on the ice.

Instead of following the long, curving sweep of the comparatively safe track, he drove in a straight line toward the landing on the farther side of the river. The ferry watchman and the man in the cutter, the latter standing up in his vehicle to see better, watched in silence and with staring eyes the progress of the foolhardy travelers. The sleigh crossed the first thin field of ice and passed the middle of the stream in safety.

"Gosh!" exclaimed the watchman. "They'll do it; but I wouldn't try it for a farm."

At that very moment, when the swiftly flying vehicle was within a hundred yards of the Pittsburg shore, horses, men and sleigh suddenly dis-



appeared from sight. There was no struggle, no re-appearance and battling for life, nothing but a wide circular expanse of water, that looked black, and in which big pieces of ice slowly came to the surface and lazily drifted down to the lower side.







## CHAPTER XVI.

### NOW, OR IN THE FUTURE?

The lovers knew nothing of the tragic incident that had occurred behind them. They were not even aware that they had been pursued, and were quite happy in the confidence that their troubles were practically at an end—the state of mind that is the rose-garlanded door through which Fate delights to usher the wayfarer into the chamber filled with her most abominable surprises. Cloudless skies are those least to be trusted, for skies, like all things else, must change, and to them all change must be for the worse. They smile most when preparing to overwhelm us.

• John drove to the old Farmers' Inn, kept by Andrew Robinson—one of the family from which Robinson's Run took its name—put his horse and cutter in charge of a hostler, led Hetty to the sitting-room and sent for the landlord. Andrew was believed to be personally acquainted with every adult in Washington County, and was so universally popular among them that, so far as



they were concerned, his was the only house of entertainment in the city. The genial old fellow deserved the regard in which he was held, for he was honest, kind-hearted and generous, worthy traits of character that were shared by his excellent wife, who was quite content to be his equal, without claiming to be his "better" half. That he was fat, somewhat bald, somewhat slow of speech, and, in some inexplicable way, had picked up a strange Quaker habit of speech in no way detracted from his general merit.

Feeling instinctively well assured of his sympathetic interest, John told him all about the elopement, as far as it had gone, and demanded his aid in the further steps necessary to realization of their hopes.

"Why, to be sure, lad. I'll stand by thee like a brother—as I would have stood by thy old father before thee, who was my good friend, had he called upon me in like case. But there is nothing to be done this day in the way of marrying. It is now sun-down, and the license cannot be taken out before to-morrow morning."

"Is a license needed?"

"For a true, lawful, binding marriage—yes. Thee might go to a squire, as, indeed, persons of small consideration in the community do—sometimes from choice and more often by necessity—but such a way of taking a wife is not meet for a Cameron; and unseemly haste is not demanded of thee by the circumstances.



Thee has cunningly thrown thy pursuers off thy track and may rest in peace this night. To-morrow thou mayest take in a seemly manner the most serious step to which thy life hath yet brought thee. Bethink thee, lad; the taking of a wife is not a light thing, like the buying of a cow. It is not thy happiness only, but thy honor and that of thy father, and a long line of Cameron's behind him, thou wilt put in the hands of this maid. When thou dost call her 'wife,' she will have one foot upon the step where now stands thy good mother. Doth not this seem then to thee a grave thing, fit to be done solemnly, with due consideration, under all required forms of law and the blessing of God? Come! Look not so glum. Thou knowest I am right. I will call down Betsy, my wife, and put her straightway in charge of the maid, that in no case of misadventure may scandal ever wag its venomous tongue against her good name."

"Why, nonsense, man! No misadventure can happen. Isn't Hetty with me, and won't we be married to-morrow?"

"Oho! So thee has in thy pocket a guarantee that thou wilt live until to-morrow! Do, for the love of Heaven, show it to me, John. Never have I beheld such a bond, and upon my soul there is nothing I have so much desired to see in all my life."

John rather sheepishly admitted that Fate had



given him no such security, though he deemed there was not much room for question in the premises. But he was sensible enough to see that the landlord's advice was good and accepted it gracefully, even gratefully. Hetty, too, who had kept very quiet notwithstanding a keen sense of disappointment and anxiety, looked much relieved. The woman's bug-bear, "being talked about," had loomed up in terrible proportions before her when the old landlord's few words had set her thinking what people might say, even after John and she were married.

Busy as her mind had been with the future the night before leaving home, certain contingencies, which now seemed the most naturally-to-be-expected things, had not occurred to her: first and most serious among them, that she and John might not get married that day, and she felt that had this seemed probable she would hardly have had the courage to run away with him.

At her husband's call of "Mother!" promptly came Mrs. Betsy Robinson, a short, plump woman with a kind, motherly face and hair that where it was smoothed upon her temples looked white and glistening like pearls—the only indication of age in her appearance. Having explained the situation, the two men went out, leaving her alone with the girl.

"And so this is Hetty Mulveil!" exclaimed the old lady, in a tone that seemed both a wel-



come and a caress. "Dear me! Dear me! Why, I knew you mother, Hetty, when she was a Wright, before she became a Mulveil; and I've seen you, too, my dear, but you were too small to remember it. If I remember rightly you called me: 'Ga-ga' or 'Na-na' or something of that sort. And, laws-a-massy, it does seem like that was only the other day! How time does fly, to be sure! And here you are a great, big, fine-looking young woman, running off to be married to your lover, who looks like the sort of chap worth taking such a risk for, I must say. But, tell me, my dear,"—and she put her arm caressingly around the girl's waist—"why did you run away from home? Was it mamma who would not consent, or did papa make the trouble?"

"Father died several years ago," answered Hetty, sadly.

"You don't tell me so! Well! Well! So he did; I remember, now. But I had forgotten it. And no wonder I did. What, with the eternal coming and going all the time in a place like this, there's no keeping track of who is alive and who is not. So it was mamma? And why did she object to your lover? As one of the Camerons he ought to be well off. Isn't he?"

"Oh, I guess so! I don't know. I never thought of that."

"'M! I suppose not. It may seem to you like a hard thing to say, my child, but that is



one of the first things to consider. Is he anything to the widow Mary Cameron, who used to be a McDougal?"

"She is his mother."

"Oho! Then no fear but he is all right for means to keep a wife. Is he wild?"

"John, wild? Oh, no! Not at all. Not so far as I ever heard, anyway."

"Then why is your mother opposed to him!"

"Because he is a Cameron."

"Oh, what a foolish woman! The idea of keeping up that old grudge to such an extent! I thought it had died out years ago. Well, such nonsense does not deserve to be countenanced, my dear child, and it will not be Betsy Robinson's fault if you don't marry the man of your heart to-morrow, no matter what mamma may think about it. But to-night you'll have to be content to bide with me. Nobody can ever say a word against you when it is known that you have been with me, the same as one of my own girls, from the time you came to town with your lover until you stood up before the minister. Young as you are in the ways of the wicked world, my dear, and thinking no evil yourself, you know little of what ill-minded persons might say if they were given the least opportunity for talk, and it is best, believe me, to do as I say."

"Oh, I will, Mrs. Robinson—just whatever you say. You are very kind, I'm sure, and I



know you are right. I wouldn't have run away as I did if I had not expected we would be married to-day. That is—I hardly think I would."

"Of course, you wouldn't, or else you would, and it don't really make any difference which, now," laughed Betsy, goodhumoredly, "for I'll see that everything is all right. When you are going home, I'll give you a letter to show to your mother, along with your marriage lines, and if she has even a little bit of sense, she'll make no more fuss. And I'm not going to be too hard on you. I've been young myself. After supper, I'll let you and John sit up in this room until ten o'clock. No person is likely to come in, because there are few in the house, the roads being so bad now, except men, and they don't come into the sitting-room much. But you must come up to bed at ten o'clock. Remember that."

"I'll not forget," promised Hetty, laughing and blushing.

John accepted the conditions with sincere thanks, and did not attempt to trespass upon the time-limit that had been set. But he took every minute of his allowance, until the clock was actually striking ten, and in that long, uninterrupted happy talk, the young couple settled thoroughly their future, for at least a very considerable distance ahead—quite forgetting that lovers' plans, like dreams, are most liable to "go by contra-



ries," as the day not yet done might well have illustrated to them. Primarily, they would be married early in the forenoon and go straight to John's mother's house, where they would live until he had fixed up the old "Duncan homestead"—which was John's by inheritance—for their own home. It would need a new roof, a new spring-house would be required, and a good deal would have to be done to the barn; all of which could be completed by time for starting the garden in the spring. They had settled what stock would have to be bought and had under discussion enlargement of the orchard—when the clock struck ten.

"I declare!" exclaimed Hetty, standing up, "if we haven't sat here all evening talking over things like a couple of old married folks, and not said ten words about love."

"It don't seem to me as if there was anything else in it at all," answered John, tenderly, rising and putting his big arm about her waist. "Haven't we been busy planning a home for Love himself?"

"But, before I leave you and run up to Mrs. Robinson, you might, just once, tell me how much you love me."

"I couldn't tell you that, Hetty, if I put all night into trying. It will take me the rest of my life to show you how much I love you."

"Darling, you have told me already!"

They were standing near the door. He



pressed her close to his breast, kissing her passionately, again and again, whispering reluctantly between the kisses:

“Good night, love; good night.”

As he relaxed his hold upon her and straightened himself up, she suddenly flung an arm about his neck, drew his head down so that her lips touched one of his ears, and whispered:

“I love you, John.”

Then, with a celerity that dazed him, she bit his ear, kissed his lips, sprang out of his arms, darted through the door and vanished. The bite was sharp, and the kiss sweet; and which came first he could not have told for the life of him.







## CHAPTER XVII.

### UNCLE DAVY'S ADVICE.

John Cameron was up before the sun, the next morning, only to learn, to his great disgust, that it would not be practicable to get a marriage license before nine o'clock. Hitherto, he had cared nothing for politics, but now he saw an imperative need for Reform—with a big R—one so great as to be worth fighting for at the polls. It was shameful, outrageous—he said to himself—that the sloth of a public servant, a mere clerk, should be permitted to keep up the bars on the road to Hymen until so preposterous an hour. Marriage licenses should be procurable at daybreak. It would do no harm if the clerk's office were kept open all night, like the watch-houses, and would doubtless be a great convenience for citizens. He wondered if he could not get the assemblyman from his district to introduce in the legislature a bill to that effect. And hours later, when he realized that what had been at the first seeming but an annoying delay, had



through the evolution of consequent events, developed into overwhelming disaster to his most cherished plans, his rage grew with his knowledge, and he swore by the Devil's Backbone that never would he vote for a candidate unpledged to antagonism to that exasperating and baneful system of restricting the issuance of marriage licenses to the hours between nine A. M. and four P. M. Well, why not? Have not party "platforms" contained less desirable "planks," and has not every American citizen an inherent right to construct a plank for himself and to jam it into a platform, too, if he can get help enough to do so?

"Now that thee has thy license, John," said Landlord Robinson to him, "there is but one minister in Pittsburg who should marry thee, and that is the Rev. Mr. Laidlaw. He filled the pulpit at Candor eleven years ago; is a brother-in-law of the Rev. Mr. McLeod, the present incumbent—who got the best of me once in a horse trade, even if he is a minister of the gospel, and I give him credit for it as I do any man who is smart enough to best me in a dicker—and is personally known to everybody in the northern half and middle of Washington County. Believe me, John, thou canst not take too many precautions in this matter. Forget it not, that a Cameron is wedding a Mulveil, and instead of its being an occasion to fan the flame of the old feud, it should bring about peace and good will.



Which it doth, dependeth in greatest measure upon thee."

"I don't see how."

"Through the degree of respect thou showest, by every detail of thy marriage, for the Mulveil thou hast chosen to take to wife. Do nought that an enemy might construe into a slight or even a thoughtless lack of consideration for her."

Mrs. Robinson used like arguments with Hetty, until the young couple began imagining that a marriage celebrated by anybody else than the Rev. Mr. Laidlaw would be no marriage at all worthy of the name, and John went in haste to secure at once the services of that necessary functionary. Alas, for the hours lost in getting the license! The minister's wife said that her husband had, about nine o'clock that morning, gone over to Alleghany to confer with some ministerial brother over something they proposed to bring before the next presbytery, and he was not at all likely to return before dark. But by six o'clock they would certainly find him at home. Could they not wait until then? "Wait!" Oh, yes, John could wait and would, if it were absolutely necessary, until evening, but no more. He said to himself that he would see Mr. Laidlaw and the whole presbytery in Halifax before he would wait until the next day.

The weather was altogether too vilely bad for any sight-seeing, to kill time with; and, indeed, there was not much worth seeing in the town in



those days; certainly nothing so attractive for John and Hetty as sitting together before the glowing fire in the cosy sitting-room of the Farmer's Inn, building their castles in the air. They took up that delightful occupation just about where they had left off the night before, and the enchanted land of their mutual dream was far from the dull, cold, gray reality of driving rain and howling wind and plashing mud beneath frowning leaden skies. With his arm about her waist, her head upon his shoulder and their voices murmuring low and tenderly, their souls floated in unison through a realm warmed and illumined by the roseate sun of love.

Furnishing the castle in the air was now the order of business. John rather thought they would not "need to buy a single stick." The great loft of the old homestead was literally filled with bedsteads, tables, chairs, chests of drawers, and such like stuff, the accumulations of three or four generations of systematic gatherers; and it was no common, cheap furniture, but solid mahogany; old-fashioned, perhaps, but none the less serviceable.

"But, will your mother consent to our taking what we want?"

"She would gladly give us as much more for taking it away out of her road. But come to think of it, there is one thing that I don't recall seeing up there."



“What, John?”

“No,” he pursued, musingly, “I don’t think there is one there; and we’ll be sure to want it.”

“But what is it, John.”

“A cradle.”

She boxed his ears, and he punished her with a kiss. Neither of them noticed the door opening behind them, and both started to their feet surprised, red and confused, as a duet of exclamations burst upon their ears. One, in a big, deep, masculine voice, was simply: “Gosh!” The other, sharply, shrilly feminine, was: “Sakes alive!”

Uncle David Henderson and Miss Mary Elder confronted the lovers.

“Why, Mehitable Mulveil!” continued the spinster, excitedly. “How on earth did you come here?”

“In John’s cutter, Mary,” answered the girl, demurely, with a roguish little smile.

“Are you married yet?” demanded Uncle David.

“No; not yet,” replied John.

Uncle David frowned severely.

“How do you come to be here?” Hetty asked her friend.

“I had a lot of dry-goods and fixin’s to get, and as Uncle David was coming to town to-day with his big sleigh, he kindly brought me along.”

“Are you married yet?” demanded John,



gravely, with a very good imitation of the older man's sternly magisterial manner.

Uncle David fairly jumped in surprise. Mary gasped: "Why, John Cameron!" And then there was a general roar of laughter.

"Come," said Uncle David, in a tone of remonstrance, interrupting the hilarity, "this is no laughing matter. You children may think it is quite a joke, but before you get through you will find it a very serious piece of business, I am afraid."

"How did you leave mother?" Hetty inquired of Mary.

"Madder than a wildcat, still. She missed you before you were gone ten minutes, I guess, and, just as quick as she could, got Simeon and his man Rufus out after you. They had not got back when I left this morning, and seeing you here, I don't suppose they have caught you yet. Your mother, instead of cooling off, seemed to be getting hotter every hour that passed, and, indeed, I was glad of a good excuse to get away."

Uncle David beckoned John to accompany him, and the two men left the room together. Outside, in the inn-yard, after looking carefully around to assure himself that he would not be overheard, the giant whispered hoarsely:

"No, they haven't come back. And they never will."

"Never will! What do you mean?"



"Just what I say, my boy; and I'm much afeared it will make the old grudge between the Mulveils and the Camerons worse than ever."

"I don't see why they shouldn't return when they haven't found us."

"Dead men don't come back."

"Dead men?"

"That's what I said. You don't know anything of what has been going on, do you? Of course not. There was nothing in the world, and nothing was going on, but you and Hetty. Well, I'll tell you something that may shake that notion. The ice in the river broke up last night. I suppose you know that much?"

"No. How should I? I crossed on it yesterday."

"Yes. I came over to-day on the horse ferry-boat that is running again. On the way over, one of the men working on the boat told me about a two-horse sleigh and two men breaking through the ice yesterday. From his description of the team and the men, I believe that was the last of Sim Mulveil and Rufe Goldie."

"If so, I'm sorry for them, but I don't see how I am responsible for their fate, as you seem to think, by the way you look at me."

"If you hadn't run off with Hetty Mulveil, it wouldn't have happened."

"Oh, if it comes to that, I'd run Hetty off and marry her if the Monongahela River were plugged with Mulveils on account of it."



“Marry her eventually, yes. That’s all right enough. But so long as that irrevocable step has not been taken already, if you will be advised by me, John, you will postpone it a little while, until this thing sort of blows over, and it will not be so likely to cause bitterness of feeling, as it would now.”

“Why, Uncle Davy, I’m not to blame for what has happened to those two chaps—if it really was they who were drowned. I didn’t invite them to follow me.”

“That’s all very true, John; but you know what the Mulveils are: They feel, but they don’t reason. When a man marries, it behooves him to do all in his power for a peaceful life, for the sake of his family if not for his own comfort. Just think what a time Hetty would have of it if all her breed were to be pecking and clawing at her every time your back was turned.”

“But, say, maybe the chaps who were drowned were not Sim and Rufe, after all.”

“We can settle that soon enough. The man on the ferryboat said that one of them had been dragged out of the eddy below the Point and taken to Munger’s iron-sheds—wherever that may be—for the coroner to sit on him. The thing for us to do is to go and see if I’m right in suspicioning what I do. The coroner may sit on it or it may sit on the coroner, for all I care.”

“All right. Come along! Does Mary Elder know about what you’ve told me?”



“Not a word, as yet.”

By the time the two men found Munger's sheds, the coroner had arrived, impaneled a jury and commenced the inquest. The body was stretched out on a board, supported by a couple of trestles. Its face was of a ghastly, bluish-white tint; its clothing saturated, disarranged and spongy-looking. The board was so narrow that to keep both feet on it, the legs had been jauntily crossed and tied in place with a bit of rope. The arms hung down, with the knuckles lying in the mud on each side, and the thumbs pressed tightly into the palms of the hands. The eyes were half-open and the jaw dropped.

There were no seats for the jury, so they stood about that extemporized bier, and, though wrapped in their great-coats, shivered. The wet corpse seemed to diffuse a chill, and the air was certainly made colder by the presence of many tons of round, square and flat iron bars, standing on end in great piles all around the walls. All the light in the place came from the big square door, against which the misty, whitish-brown day seemed to lean sullenly.

One witness told the story of how he pulled the body, with a boat-hook, out of the eddy. Another recognized the body as that of one of the two travellers who had scorned his advice and consequently drowned within his sight. The third witness, Uncle David Henderson, told whose the body was. It was Rufus Goldie's.



He knew him well and was positive in the identification. One of the jurymen asked him if he knew anything of the circumstances leading to the drowning, especially if the man Goldie was intoxicated. He replied :

“ I have not seen him before to-day for a month, I believe ; did not know he was coming into town ; and his drowning occurred yesterday, as I am told, while I did not arrive until this afternoon.”

The Canny Scot had told exact truth, but at the same time adhered to his resolution that John's love affair should not be mixed up with the death of a Mulveil any sooner than was unavoidable. As for the inquiring jurymen, he innocently supposed that his question had been answered. John did not feel called upon to say anything.

On the way back to the inn, Uncle David continued to urge upon John even more strongly than before the imperative necessity for postponing the marriage, but the young man was in no humor to be convinced.

“ Just wait until the row blows over,” pleaded the giant, “ and then come back and marry right there. I don't like the idea of a Cameron running away to get married, anyhow.”

“ The difficulties in the way will always be the same. You've no idea how bitter the old woman is against me. Why, she has even threatened to scald me.”



“What of it? The hotter a woman flares up, the sooner her fire is burned out. The louder and harder she cackles, the sooner she will get tired and be quiet. I’ll pledge you my word, John, that if you’ll wait now and only come back when I send for you, you shall have Hetty then and marry her in public, even if fifty Camerons with their rifles have to stand around you—and I’ll engage to keep the old woman off with an umbrella, myself.”

“A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”

But when the tragic end of the pursuers was told to the girls at the inn, Uncle David found an ally in Mary Elder.

“If you go back married, now,” she said to Hetty, “the very success of your running away will sting those who don’t like John, and all the Mulveils will blame you and him for what has happened to Sim and Rufe. But if you wait awhile, folks will begin to talk around that it was a sort of judgment on Sim and Rufe, and that they deserved on general principles, what they got; which is no doubt quite true. Then it will be safe enough for John to come back without any trouble occurring, and your mother will naturally have to give in. She can’t hold out long.”

Hetty reluctantly and ruefully admitted that Mary was right and assented to the postponement, but John resisted stoutly for a long time, arguing that it would look cowardly to go so



far and stop short. At length, when Hetty not only succumbed to the pressure but even demonstrated some satisfaction with the new arrangement, as it seemed to him, he was bitterly piqued and suddenly ceased all opposition.

"Do as you like," he said. "When you make up your mind that you want me, you can send for me, and if I ain't too busy, I suppose I'll come."

"Oh, John! How can I leave you all alone here?"

"Don't mind about me—I'll be all right. Maybe I'll like city life when I get used to it. But, no odds about me; you do as Uncle David says—and be derved to him."

"You know I don't want to, John; only it seems like I ought to; and if it had been right we should get married now, maybe things wouldn't have stood in the way so. And—and—you oughtn't to be so cross with me, John."

"There, there, darling, don't cry!" said the big fellow, taking her in his arms caressingly and soothing her by the kindness of his tones, as she hid her face on his breast. "I'm not cross with you; I'm not mad at you, dear. Only it's a derved sight out of the way from what I had made up my mind for, and I wish to thunder you hadn't come to town, Uncle David."





## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A DISCOVERY IN PITTSBURG.

John's dislike for the new programme grew during the night, so that by the time morning came, had Hetty given him the slightest encouragement, he would have revolted against Uncle David's authority and become a married man before breakfast. But Mary Elder, who really had much confidence in Uncle David's judgment and took care he should observe she had, shared the girl's bed and was successful in deepening the impression already made upon her in favor of a postponement of the marriage.

"It ain't the way I want it, any more than it's the way you want it, John," she said, in consultation with her lover, "but I guess it's for the best. We are young and can afford to wait a little while, anyway."

"There's always risk in waiting!" growled John.



“Not for us. All the horses ain’t going to die nor the roads to be built up. And when I say I’ll wait for you, John, I mean it. I don’t care what mother or anybody else says. There’ll be nobody for me but you, John, if I have to wait for you until Raccoon Creek runs across the top of the Devil’s Backbone!”

“I’ll make a heap of excitement in Washington County before I’ll stand any such waiting as that!” answered John, grimly.

But the matter was settled for the time being, and, recognizing that fact, he accepted it as philosophically as he could, even—through a remnant of pique—assuming a cheerfulness that he was far from feeling, as he saw Hetty carried away by Uncle David and Mary.

For a few days, the country lad, thus left to himself among the ashes of his hopes, felt miserably lonely and could not shake off an impression that the part he had played was not one to be proud of. To be sure the landlord said he had done quite rightly, but there was a twinkle in the old fellow’s eyes and a lurking smile on his fat lips that said he would not have acted so. And he imagined that Mistress Betsy, too, though she went so far as to pronounce his conduct “noble” and “prudent,” wore a smile of contemptuous pity most exasperating to him. He felt that he could not stand well in his own estimation; for the plain, unvarnished fact of the case was that, after carrying off triumphantly the girl he loved



and who loved him, he had permitted himself to be talked out of his prize. Decidedly, he said to himself, he deserved to be jeered and laughed at, but he would break the nose of the first man who gave him that desert. The atmosphere of the Farmers' Inn became unendurable to him, and he hunted up a lodging elsewhere, beyond the probability of encounter with any who knew him.

He found this secluded haven in Temperanceville, the then charming little suburb covering the side-hill and extending down into the valley south of Saw-mill Run, below South Pittsburg. Most of that territory, now covered by great, grimy, roaring factories, mills and crowded tenements, was then dotted over with pretty cottages and white frame-buildings, two or three stories high, embowered amid trees and vines and surrounded by gardens, glorious in the summer-time with their brilliant and fragrant wealth of flowers. The people of Temperanceville were rich only in health and children, for it was a laboring population; but the conditions of labor, infinitely better then than they have since become, did not involve privation and squalor as inevitable concomitants. Happy content was visible everywhere, in the tasteful, comfortable homes; the stalwart, independent-looking men upon the streets; the plump, good-looking matrons and the chubby little folks who fairly swarmed in the place. John felt better when he



had found a domicile over there, among entire strangers. At least, the Monongahela River no longer rolled between him and Hetty; he was on the road that led to home and her.

To kill time while awaiting Uncle David's message of recall—honestly keeping the promise that he most bitterly regretted having made—he formed a habit of haunting the great iron mills and glass-works near the mouth of the Run and along the narrow strip of available ground between Coal Hill and the River. Insensibly that atmosphere, pulsating with energy and thrilling with the operation of tremendous forces all about him, awoke in the young man new ideas and comprehensions of life, stirring him first with awe, then with curiosity and finally with a burning desire to bear an active part in that mighty vibration. The machinery's rumbling roar filling the air, the quivering of the solid earth beneath his feet, the vivid bursts of colored flame that dazzled his sight, the earnest, purposeful activity of the muscular toilers who jostled him—all together had for him an indescribable fascination. This, he knew, was more truly man's work than any he had known before.

One day he accidentally learned that the daily wages of a puddler were more than the weekly earnings of a skillful harvester. The embers of Scotch thrift latent in him began to glow. He wished to be a puddler. What did the puddler



do? He went to the mill and watched one critically. The chap he made a study of was a huge, muscular fellow, a very giant, with short curly hair, close-matted and dark with perspiration; a neck like that of a bull; naked to the waist, showing thews and sinews like those of a gladiator. His eyes were red and his skin seemed baked to a light reddish brown. With his brawny legs braced wide apart, the big muscles of his arms, shoulders and back knotting, extending and writhing like serpents in motion, he busied himself doing something with a long iron bar thrust through a hole in an iron door.

John tried to look into the hole, but could see only an intense white light, that seemed to dry his eyeballs and left a cherry-red spot in his vision, wherever he looked, for several minutes afterward. But the giant saw clearly what he was doing with his iron bar in there. His trained sight could distinguish nice gradations of color in that apparently incandescent glow. Presently he uttered a sharp word of warning, at hearing which his helper, standing near and, like him, naked to the waist, sprang under a heavy stream of water flowing constantly from an open pipe higher than his head, was drenched in an instant and jumped back to his place. Then the pudler shouted another word; there was a rattle of chains, a skreek and clash of metal, and where the whole had been yawned a wide opening into



the fiercely glowing chamber where molten iron boiled like water in a pot.

John knew that was what was in there, but could no more see it than he could distinguish objects upon the sun's surface at high noon. But the puddler did not appear to mind the dazzling glare. Quickly stepping backward, he withdrew from the furnace-front the iron bar he had been manipulating, with a great ball of iron, in a plastic state, adhering to the end. That ball, larger than his head, looked to John like a chunk of the sun.

The helper, by the aid of tongs pendent from a "traveller" in the semi-blackness far overhead, seized the candent mass and ran with it before him, like a small comet of which he was the tail, or the true phlogiston, away across the mill to the "crusher." The furnace-door closed automatically with a clang, leaving only a pencil of white light darting out of a little hole in its center and stabbing like a blade through the murk of the mill; and the puddler, leaping under the falling stream of water, spread his big arms and threw back his head to let the crystal flood dash upon his upturned face and broad, hairy breast. Steam went up from him as if he had been red-hot.

John had some doubt as to whether his eyes would stand such cooking as the puddler's got, but apart from that, the work pleased him, and he resolved to master it. Whether he would



continue at it an hour after he received his summons of recall, was quite another matter. It would be absurd that he, already the owner of two fine farms and prospective heir to a third, larger and better than both of them, should acquire a permanent habit of puddling iron for day's wages during the rest of his life, but what better or more manly occupation could he find while divorced from his farms? None, surely. So he found employment as a helper with a good-natured giant, whose willingly given instruction and his own natural aptitude for learning, speedily put him in possession of the merely mechanical trick of puddling, and opened his eyes to the seriousness of an attempt to master a real knowledge of this delicate scientific process.

Half a dozen workers in iron and glass boarded in the same house with John Cameron. They were generally rough fellows, honest enough but coarse, and instinctively appreciative of the fact that he was not really one of them. Consequently they rather held aloof from him. There was one, however, a glass-blower, known as "Billy the Barker," with whom his sympathetic pity brought him upon terms of more intimacy. Billy was a lean, under-sized, hollow-cheeked chap, past middle-age, weak and shy, upon whom consumption had set the seal of doom. He had frequent violent and protracted spells of coughing, and was unable to work more than one or



two days in the week usually, so he was destitute, wretched and tired of life.

One night, John returning home very late from work, found Billy seated on the well-cover in the garden, with his lean arms twined about his knees, and shivering.

"Hello!" exclaimed the young man. "What are you doing here? Don't you know that with such a cough as yours, you shouldn't be out in this damp night air?"

"I know I shouldn't, but there's no choice for me. I'm sort of shy about having heavy boots chucked at my head."

"What do you mean?"

"There are four of us in the room where I have a bed. My three companions close the windows and smoke pipes until all is blue. That sets me coughing, and if I cannot stop when they want to go to sleep, they run me out."

"How do they run you out?"

"Chucking their hob-nailed boots at my head."

"How often does this happen?"

"Pretty nearly every night."

"And do you stay out all night, so that they may sleep?"

"Well, hardly ever *all* night, sir. When they're sound asleep to'rds morning, I slip in. But to-night Jem Hodges has been drinking and is ugly, and he swears he'll break my neck if I show my face before daylight."

"Do you think he would?"



"I haven't the slightest doubt of it, sir."

"I have. Come right up now and let's see."

"Oh, no, indeed, sir! I don't dare."

"If you don't, I'll spank you myself. The idea of your being turned out at the whim of a drunken bully! Come on! I'll see that he doesn't harm you."

Billy obeyed tremblingly.

Jem waked the instant they crossed the threshold of the room and swore a mighty oath to "do" Billy if he did not instantly vanish.

"No," said John, seizing the little man's collar as he turned to flee, "this is no night for a man with a cough like his to be out, and he is going to bed."

"Hexcuse me," responded Jem, with a mocking affectation of courtesy, "but Hi suppose you 'av'n't been hinformed has Hi said has 'ow 'e was to git hout."

"Oh, yes. But that don't make any difference."

Jem was for a few moments literally paralyzed with astonishment, and the other two men in their beds sat up and stared in silence, aghast at such audacity.

"D'ye know who Hi ham?" roared Jem, when he recovered his breath.

"No! And don't care!"

"Oho! You don't? Well, Hi'm the Liverpool Terror—Hi ham; hand Hi'll make you care!"



As he spoke, he sprang out of bed and made a rush for the audacious American. Had the ensuing fight been conducted according to the rules of the London "prize-ring," in which Jem had won some laurels, he would have been a very ugly antagonist for the untrained young farmer, with all the latter's quickness, strength and courage. But in a "rough and tumble," John could hit twice to his once, and Jem soon had a lively experience of what has come to be technically known in latter days as "cyclonic fighting."

His room-mates, highly delighted with this unexpected nocturnal entertainment, conducted themselves as critical spectators, encouraging and criticising the combatants as occasion seemed to invite.

"'E's bestin' thee, lad," said one of them.

"Hi'll break 'im hin two!" howled Jem, only to be on the instant himself floored.

"Hast no license to break yon chap in two," commented one of his friends, dryly.

"Looks like thou'd get broke thyself," added the other.

Jem had no spare breath for further idle speech. Billy made himself as small as possible in an angle of the wall and stared in anxious terror. It was not long until Jem was caught in a wrestling "lock" of his own seeking and thrown with such violence that for a moment he was stunned. When he regained his senses, he found



his nose flattened on the floor, John's knee upon his neck, and one of his arms twisted up on his back, in John's grasp, so that a very little tug upon it gave him excruciating pain.

"Can Billy go to bed now and stay there undisturbed?" John asked.

Jem was sullenly silent until his arm was twitched. Then, with profane emphasis, he replied that Billy might, and so far as he was concerned, stay there until the judgment-day. Thereupon John let him up, and peace reigned again.

"Blow me hif you hain't ha good un, young feller," growled the defeated "Liverpool Terror" in the surly but sincere recognition of genius that his own professional standing among "the fancy" demanded.

From that time on, Billy never needed a protector again, but his gratitude seemed to inspire in him an almost dog-like affection for and attachment to the strong young American who had come so opportunely to his aid. And John took the interest in him that men almost always get to feel in the weaker things they help and shield.

"Of course," said Billy, "I can never do anything to return your kindness. I'm no good any more. But I wasn't always so. Glass-blowing has done me up, as it did my father before me. It just takes the lungs out of us, especially such as work on window-glass, and that's my line. When it first caught me, about five years



ago, I couldn't believe it, I had always been so well. But my children were always sickly. I thought it was the damp climate of England that ailed me, so I came here. Maybe it would have helped me if I had come sooner; but I had waited too long. I kept getting worse. The doctor said if I went on glass-blowing it would soon kill me. Still I stuck to it, for I could earn good wages when I was able to work, and I wanted to get enough together to bring over my wife and children—only two left, the last of five. At last, I had to give up; but I knew nothing else to do, and wasn't strong enough for much. I went to peddling books—religious books—but could scarcely live at it, to say nothing of sending money home. So every time I got a little better, out on the road in the open air, I would go back to the glass-works, and when they had used me up, I took to the road again. It was all ups and downs, but each up was less high than the one before, and each down was lower. Still I hung on to my hope and earned wages every time I was strong enough to stand on the plank until about eight months ago when I got a letter that told me my wife was dead of typhoid, and my children—little Mabel, only three years old, and the baby—were taken by the parish. Oh, how I did pray for strength to earn money to bring them to me. I felt as if I could steal, almost kill, for that. But praying did no good. My lungs were never



worse than then. The next I heard, the children were dead, the baby first and then my sweet little Mabel. Well, they 're better off, and no farther from me now than they were before, maybe nearer; but—O God, how lonely I feel!"

Such confidences naturally provoked a return from John, and he told the story of how he came to be in Temperanceville, beginning with his falling in love with Hetty Mulveil up on the Devil's Backbone. The narration seemed to have much interest for Billy, who asked many questions concerning its incidents, particularly those connected with the adventure on the cliff. Partly through his apparent intuition and in part by a revivification in John's mind of the half-forgotten occurrences of that memorable Training-Day conflict, the two men together arrived at a pretty accurate understanding of previously unrecognized facts. John comprehended that in some way Constable Sim Mulveil had attained the knowledge that those silver spoons found on the cliff were stolen, and had actually dared to suspect him—a Cameron!—of being the thief, and had sought to arrest him as such. The thought made John's blood boil with indignant anger, and for the first time he sincerely regretted that Sim was drowned and beyond his reach. Rufus Goldie, he recalled, had denounced him as a "thief!" So long as he had considered that epithet merely a provocative for a fight, it had made no serious impression upon him; but



now that he felt Goldie meant it, he was as wild with rage as if it had just been uttered. And Goldie drowned, too! It was very hard.

The reflection suggested itself to him that Simeon, if really intending to arrest him, must have had a warrant, and that warrant was still in existence, liable to be used against him any time. The death of an officer does not stop the wheels of the law. Even if it were never served, the squire who issued it must know of it and would tell others about it. Clearly, it was necessary for him to go home at once and clear things up. So he straightway sat him down and wrote to Uncle David, detailing the facts, demanding his promise back, declaring that he must and would come home, whether or no, and that in three days he would follow his letter, "Hetty or no Hetty."







## CHAPTER XIX.

### HOME AGAIN.

John did not really mean that "Hetty or no Hetty." The possibility of "no Hetty" had not entered his mind at all. He just meant the words as an expression of extremest emphasis; and on the third day after writing that letter he set out, as he had declared he would, for home. As he had sold his horse and cutter before leaving the Farmers' Inn, it was necessary for him to make the journey on foot; but he cared nothing for that. A twenty-five mile walk, in such fine weather, was nothing to him.

He would have liked to bid farewell to poor Billy the Barker, but Billy had mysteriously disappeared, and it was the opinion of the woman who kept the boarding-house that he had gone into the river, as he had often threatened to. All John could do was to leave his address, to be given to the man, if he ever returned, and with it a message that if he would come out to the Cameron farm he might stay there until he got well, "and it wouldn't cost him a cent."



It was upon one of the lovely days of early spring, when the dew was still upon the grass, that John turned his back upon Temperanceville. At the top of the first high hill he turned and gazed upon the city. The golden light of the sun, passing through the low-hanging dome of sooty clouds above it, took on a dull saffron tint, and the two rivers looked like tarnished silver. From tall chimneys everywhere columns of black smoke rose straight to the pall-like sky, as if supporting it. Here and there, in the bases of those columns, glowed tongues of flame, hardly perceptible now, but, as he well remembered, brilliant at night with their changing hues of blue and gold and crimson. Distant as he was, the roar of the mills reached his ears as a dull, unceasing growl. Step by step, as he moved backward from the crest of the hill, the city seemed to drop away from before him until it was all gone and only the black dome above it remained, growing hourly vaster in breadth and height.

In late years, Pittsburg has won a temporary respite from her old conditions of grime and smudge and gloom through the utilization of natural gas instead of bituminous coal in her many thousands of fire-places. Her buildings are brighter, her air clearer and her people cleaner and perhaps happier by reason of the change ; but she has lost something of her former distinctive picturesqueness.



Five miles out of town, turning a bend in the road—around the corner of an old school-house famous for its complete covering of roses in the month of June—John met Uncle David Henderson, in a light wagon and driving a double team at a spanking gait. After their first exclamations of mutual gratified surprise at the encounter, the giant sat staring at his nephew, too much occupied with studying him to even think of asking him to get into the wagon.

“Why do you stare so at me, uncle?” asked John.

“You look so different from what you used to. Of course I knew you, the moment I saw you, but, John, you don’t look like the same boy!”

“I am older.”

“Only four months. ’T aint that. You have a different look. What have you been doing?”

“Working in a rolling-mill.”

“Ah, that’s it! Jump in, and I’ll turn around.”

“Don’t you want to go on into town?”

“No. I only came after you.”

“So you did get my letter then, and never answered it.”

“Didn’t hey? What do you call this? Could I send a wagon and team by mail? But I was coming for you anyway.”

When the horses’ heads were turned homeward, Uncle David again remarked upon the change in John’s appearance.



“Men’s looks,” he said, “depend a good deal on how they live, their surroundings and their work. I’ve always known that, but never appreciated it so much as I do now in seeing you. The young fellow who works on a farm in the peace and quiet there environing him, with the influence always pressing upon him of Nature’s slow processes, which he cannot control but only help, unconsciously sinks into a tacit acceptance of a secondary place in the scale of being. The dormant seed, slow-growing tree and long-ripening harvest, all compel him to recognition of the law of patient submission to the invisible force that is operating at the same time and in the same way upon him and upon all things surrounding him. Nature masters him; the seasons make him their slave; it is more correct to say of him that he vegetates, than that he lives.

“But it is different with the man who governs and utilizes the mighty and swift-moving forces of the mill. He controls the fierce fires that melt the stubborn ore; wields the tremendous machinery that shapes the unwilling metal to his desire; nothing is too hard or too heavy for him; the roar that fills his ears is a pæan in praise of his genius and might; nature submissively obeys his will, his pulses swell and thrill with the consciousness of power, and he bears himself erect with the dignity of masterhood. What does not the world of to-day owe to the men who make the iron! They are the true kings of civilization.



Practically, all that is fashioned, all that is done, all that is thought for the world's progress to-day is rooted in their work. The first iron-worker was a god, and a god among gods, mind you. What would Jove's thundering have amounted to if he had not had Vulcan to forge his thunderbolts for him?"

"Why, you surprise me, Uncle David. I had no idea you felt that way. How does it come that you never went into iron-working?"

"I hardly know myself. Sometimes it seems to me that in some dimly remembered, remote time, as if in a half-forgotten former life, I wrought iron. It is a curious fancy that comes to me, not in dreams, as you might suppose, but when I am all alone, wide awake, sitting still, letting my mind do its own thinking and not trying to control it at all. And it has come to me, too, when visiting an iron mill and seeing new and strange machinery, which I would at once comprehend the uses of, without explanation, and recognize as an improvement upon something I would vaguely remember as employed for a like purpose in some shadowy, by-gone time, far back of the knowledge of Davy Henderson. It is strange that I aye contented me on a farm. And yet, on second thoughts, it isn't. There are few men, I think, who would not fain be something else than what they are and fill some other place than that into which fate has thrust and keeps them. I guess, the



much I've done in building has kept me content. Building is next to iron-making. The happiest days of my life, I believe, were those in which I was building that stone court-house; and the bigger the stone to be handled was, the better I liked the job. Gosh, lad, I'd like to build with mountains! But, eh, what an old dreamer I'm getting to be! Come! Let's talk of something else. What are you going to do?"

"I'm not very clear about anything beyond marrying Hetty and finding out if it's true that skunk, Sim Mulveil, had a warrant for me, and if so, what for."

"Oho! So that is worrying you? Well, some think he had, but more don't believe it, and nobody pretends to say what it was for. Something was said, on Training Day, about thieving, but it is understood, of course, that that was only to start the fight. The way Sim and Rufus came to their just and righteous end gives some color to the rumor that there was a warrant for you and Sim had it, for some of those cussed Mulveils have jumped, by sheer guesswork, to the fact that he and Rufe were drowned when chasing you."

"And Hetty?"

"No. The curious thing is that her elopement is not known to a soul in Washington County except her mother and yours, Mary Elder and me."

"And Danny?"



"Well, I suppose that imp may have some idea of it, but it's hardly likely, or he would have blabbed it, just for mischief."

John smiled, thinking he knew Danny better, but did not feel called upon to defend him.

"But, to return to what I was saying, some of the Mulveils do have the idea I mentioned, and do sort of blame you. And it is just possible they may try to make things unpleasant for you on your return, just at first."

"Any Mulveil who desires trouble with me can have all he wants of it."

"I have no doubt, and it is just to avert anything of the sort, that I want matters a little my way just now. It is only by giving no opportunities for the breaking out of that foolish old grudge, we can hope to ever get it extinguished. It is a disgrace to us as civilized men and Christians that it should exist, and just see how it stands in the way of your own happiness."

"Well, what do you propose?"

"I will take you straight home, and I want you to stay there until I come for you to-morrow morning. We will go to church together. It will be Communion Sabbath, and everybody will be there."

"I'll go to church with you, Uncle David, but I don't feel like promising that I will stay at home until then."

"You want to go and see Hetty to-night. Now, be ruled by me this once, John, for your



own good. Don't go there to-night. It will only make trouble for you and Hetty. Do as I tell you, and I think I can promise you that before long when you go there you will receive a welcome. Take my advice, and stay at home to-night."

"Well; I'll do it I'll wait until to-morrow. But understand, nothing holds me after church. I know myself too well now to promise what I will, or will not, do after I've seen Hetty again."

"We'll try to make the treatment as light for you, John, as the nature of your case will permit."

Uncle David let his horses jog along at easy pace. They had already traversed the road once that day, having been started on it long before dawn, and the old man—one of whose favorite maxims was: "The merciful man is merciful unto his beast"—saw no occasion for hurrying their return. As it was, he had John home long before dark, and drove away to his own house, leaving the lad in his mother's arms.

Mrs. Cameron's joy over the return of her son could hardly have been greater had he just got back from a three-year whaling voyage. Never until he ran away with Hetty had he spent a night from home, and a miserably lonely old woman she had felt herself during his seemingly interminable absence. He had only been gone four months, according to the almanac, but no calendar correctly marks the flight of time for



those who love the absent. And really, she declared, he must have been gone much longer, for he had had time to grow bigger, stronger, more manly, graver, with a more assured manner and self-confident bearing than was his before. The imperceptible degrees by which he had grown up, day by day, under her eyes constantly, since his infancy, had somehow kept alive in her heart the fancy of looking upon her big boy as still her little child, until now this break had come in the habits of a lifetime, and it was with a startled, half-painful feeling that, looking upon this great, strong, self-reliant, purposeful-looking man, she missed her little child. It was only as she closed her eyes and listened to his voice that the sweet, long-cherished fancy came back to her. And even the voice, she imagined, had a firm, ringing tone that it did not use to have. She sighed. It would take a little time for her to grow accustomed to this new John.

After supper, mother and son sat upon the doorstep, looking out on the garden, watching the swift martins in their graceful flights about the old house, to which they had but recently returned for the summer. Until now she had kept him talking about himself and what he had been doing when away from her. Finally she said :

“Something very strange has happened here, John. Yesterday morning, the Reverend Mr.



McLeod sent over a note, asking for the spoons and watch you found up on the 'Backbone.' "

"How did he know I ever found anything there?"

"That is more than I can tell you. All I know is that he asked for them; and, more than that, he knew the initials on the spoons—'R. W. B.'—and the number in the watch."

"I suppose he has in some way found out the owner. You sent them to him, of course?"

"Yes. I sent them all."

"That was right."

"And he sent again to say would I please, when you came home, send you over, too."

"Me! Is there anything more he wants?"

"I don't know. But I shouldn't be surprised if there were. The clergy are always great hands for asking, you know."

"Well, I'll meet him at church to-morrow, and see about it then."

"Maybe."

"Why do you say 'maybe,' mother?"

"I'm thinking it's little you'll see or hear to-morrow but Hetty Mulveil."

"I do want to see her, that's a fact, mother. I've been away such a long time."

"Don't I know it, my boy? Haven't you been away from me for the first time in your life? Oh, yes. I know it has been a long time."

"Well, I won't go away from home any more, for anybody or anything. I'll just marry Hetty,



and settle down to become a regular old moss-back farmer."

"Why do you speak that way, John, of what your father was—a farmer?"

He looked at her and hesitated. Should he tell her how he sympathized with his Uncle David's admiration for the manly work of iron-making? The fascination it had for him? No. It would only make her uneasy, perhaps, with a fear that some day he might go away again to the mill. So he only laughed, and replied lightly:

"Why, mother, don't the rocks and trees and everything that stays long in one place get a coat of moss? Can't you imagine there is a sort of invisible but real moss creeping over us, too, when we keep quiet in one spot a good while?"

"What a notion! When are you going to marry Hetty?"

"The very first chance I can make after church to-morrow."

The old woman meditated in silence for a little while; then, stroking his hair with an affectionate, caressing touch and suppressing a sigh, said gently:

"I shall have to be the best mother I can for both of you. Mrs. Mulveil isn't reported as taking any more kindly to the arrangement than she did when Hetty ran away with you."

"Say, tell me, mother; don't you think I should have married her then?"

"I do not presume to say, my boy. But I



think, if your father had run off with me, there would have been a wedding before either of us got back."

John silently gritted his teeth. She went on:

"Mr. Roger McFarlane is said to be making very serious advances to the widow Mulveil. I suppose some folks will say such goings-on are shameful between two like them, who are at least old enough to know better, but for my part I do not see that it is anybody else's business than their own. And I would be very glad of it if the effect should be, as it very well might, to soften her and give her something else to think about than crossing Hetty."

"The old Scotchman would make her a really good husband, I have no doubt, and whatever influence he might have would certainly be used in my behalf."

"I don't question it; and I don't doubt Mrs. Mulveil would be quite a decent body herself if she could only be induced to forget that Hetty's father was a Mulveil. I should think she'd want to. A Mulveil, indeed! Not that I have anything against the Mulveils myself. I'm sure Hetty could not be any prettier, or better girl, whatever she might be. But—oh, dear! I do wish sometimes, John, that she were a Cameron!"

"So do I, dear mother," replied John, laughingly, "and I mean that she shall be, just as soon as possible."





## CHAPTER XX.

### A GIANT IN LOGIC AND LOVE.

Uncle David did not doubt John's good intent to keep his word about staying at home that evening. Nevertheless, he said to himself :

"Human nature is weak, and the temptation of love is strong. I had better stroll over there after supper and keep an eye on John for awhile."

That was, perhaps, all well enough ; but why should Uncle David—ordinarily so careless about his personal appearance—have taken so much trouble in combing and brushing his hair and beard, changing his coat for a better one and putting on a smart neck-tie? He would hardly have done so much by way of preparation for attending a meeting of the elders or of the board of supervisors.

John and his mother were still sitting in the door, when he put in an appearance before them, and at the farther end of the porch, in front of the new extension of the house, Miss



Mary Elder occupied a rocking-chair, enjoying her evening rest after a busy day of work on Mrs. Cameron's summer wardrobe. Seeing that the widow and her son were in earnest converse, the giant went up on the porch and seated himself near the spinster, with the most casual, unpremeditated and unconcerned manner he could assume, quite unconscious that behind him John was lifting his eyebrows with a look of surprised inquiry, to which Mrs. Cameron replied by a nod and knowing smile.

In the commencement of their conversation, both Uncle David and Mary spoke with ordinary loudness, but gradually, when weather and health and the look of the wheat had been disposed of, their voices dropped so as to be audible only to each other.

"You are working too hard, Miss Mary," David said to her. "If you keep on, the confinement and bending over your needle so steadily will affect your health and good looks."

"You are very good to interest yourself in me, sir," she replied hesitatingly, with an unpleasant sense of constraint and awkwardness in encountering the novel experience of even an only implied compliment.

"Oh, no. If we lone estrays from the domestic folds do not take an interest in each other's welfare, we are likely to be overlooked and forgotten altogether."

He spoke jocosely, but with a shade of earnest-



ness in his tone, that Mary could not but be aware of.

"I'm sure it would not be easy to overlook you," she responded, smilingly.

"Perhaps 'overlooked' is not just the word I should have used. I remember finding once, in the edge of the creek, a bottle containing a fish. The foolish creature seemed to have gone in there when small, and been unable to find its way out until it grew too large to do so. No doubt all the fishes that went by its transparent prison saw it, and possibly wondered why it staid there instead of joining in the general swim, assuming the responsibilities and discharging the social and domestic duties recognized in fish communities. But the environment established for it by its own youthful folly had been too strong for it, until I came along, broke the bottle and restored it to its proper place among the multitude of its kind in the common pursuit of happiness and probable realization of pin-hooks."

"Dear me!" said Mary, looking puzzled. "How very kind of you!"

"Occasionally," he went on, "I fancy myself like that bottled fish. I had chosen, or, at least, had accepted an environment that became a prison. In other words, I find myself a confirmed old bachelor."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mary, smiling approval of the course he was manifestly heading. "A bachelor, yes; but not so very old."



"'M; well, old enough to know better; old enough to realize that no phase of human existence is more selfish, useless and devoid of real happiness than that in which I have so long elected to live. Now, in all frankness, Mary, what good are you and I to the world, as we are? I may even ask: What good are we to ourselves, since, if we are no good to others, we cannot be to ourselves? Thanks to our industrious, frugal habits, the longer we live and go on as we are, the more property we will have accumulated by the time we are called upon to leave it. And we will leave behind all that we have lived for—leave it to those who, in a few years will have forgotten us. Our names will have been written in water."

"I'm sure I have heard of your doing many a kind action to the poor and unfortunate, Mr. Henderson."

"The proof that I have not done enough is that I still possess far more than I will ever have any personal need for."

"I confess I never thought of it in that way. I have always tried to do what I felt my duty called me to, in the way of sending the gospel to the heathen and such like; but a woman isn't expected to do much, you know, and I've saved up a pretty snug sum, more, as you say, than I will ever have any personal need for."

"I don't doubt it; and yet here you are working away as hard as ever to get more, and drift-



ing around from place to place, without a home you can call your own."

"And don't you think I feel that? Oh, many a time, even where people have been as kind to me as if I were one of their own folks, I have cried myself to sleep over thinking how utterly alone I was."

"I can understand your feeling very well. Isolation is infinitely more painful and harder to bear than solitude. I've no doubt women may find relief from it in crying, but men can't; they are more likely to take refuge in reading, religion or rum. I take most kindly to the first, tolerate the second and detest the third. Books have been family and friends to me all my life. Are you fond of books?"

"Oh, yes, sir! But I have not had much time to read."

"What have you read?"

"Well—Fox's 'Book of Martyrs' and 'Charlotte Temple' and 'The Scottish Chiefs' and the 'Method of Grace' and the Seven Champions of Christendom' and—"

Uncle David made a grimace and interrupted her dryly:

"I see. A charmingly systematic and improving course. You need more time for reading, a home of your own to do your reading in, and somebody to look after what you read. And I need somebody to brighten my home and be a new interest to me, superior to my books, of



which I think I have had enough for a while. I want my bottle of bachelordom broken to let me out into the current where the rest of the fishes—who at least look happier—are swimming. Suppose we combine our requirements and in so doing find satisfaction for them all. Let us get married. What do you say?"

Mary hesitated, hung her head, felt her cheeks reddening with a blush unseen in the deepening obscurity of the evening and sighed a gentle :

"Yes."

Perhaps she had not long cherished the hope that some day Uncle David would make such a proposal to her; possibly her pulses did not at that very moment thrill with the triumphant consciousness of achievement; certainly nothing of the sort was apparent in her timid, submissive, maidenly manner—but then, it is very hard to guess at what a woman really thinks and feels at such a moment. It is altogether probable—for Mary had a warm, affectionate heart, inclined to be sentimental and even romantic—that she would have liked to hear "love" at least referred to. But she was sensible enough to understand that it is not always those who say "love" most glibly who feel it most truly. A man like Uncle David does not marry without the incentive of love, and when he asks a woman to be his wife, she will do well to be satisfied with his proposal in the form he chooses to make it.

A serious, reflective silence fell upon both,



which, after a few minutes, Uncle David was the first to break, resuming, in a business-like way :

“So much being settled, we may as well go on with the arrangements for carrying the agreement into effect. When shall we be married?”

The abruptness of that summons to decisive action startled her, and she answered, with a little nervous laugh :

“Why, having waited so long, it would hardly be becoming for us to be in haste now.”

“The longer we have waited, the less time we have to waste. It behooves us to do promptly whatever we have in view,” he replied, dogmatically.







## CHAPTER XXI.

### DANNY'S LATEST.

The upshot of the matter was that she proposed deferring their wedding to that indeterminate date, "the day John and Hetty marry," to which Uncle David readily acceded, with a sly smile, having reasons of his own for believing that that event would not be far off.

Hetty's heart would have been lighter that Saturday night could she have shared Uncle David's confidence in the immediate future, but the outlook did not, as she viewed it, promise well. Her mother's opposition, though less bitter than it had been, was no less determined, and was now settled upon a new ground, from which it seemed impossible to dislodge her. She no longer made much of the old feud between the Mulveils and the Camerons, over which she used to lash herself into a fury. Now, with a dramatic intensity of expression that would have been ludicrous had it not been so evidently in deep earnest, she declared that "the curse of



blood" lay between Hetty and her lover and must forever keep them apart.

"Whose blood?" demanded Hetty, when this astounding declaration was first made to her.

"Simeon Mulveil's, to be sure. Didn't John Cameron lure him to his death?"

"Didn't he go to his death like a fool, chasing a man he had no business to follow?"

"Yes, he had business. I sent him."

"Oh! Then, if somebody else than himself must be held responsible for his fate, I don't see but what you, mother, and not John Cameron, are to blame."

That was precisely what the widow's accusing conscience said to her, notwithstanding all her endeavors to persuade herself that not she, but John Cameron, had caused the constable's death, and it was naturally exasperating to find that view so readily taken by another.

"Of course, you would try to clear him, and I don't wonder at it, for by rights you are as much to blame as he is. If you hadn't enticed him to run away with you, your cousin would never have had to follow you and been led to his death. But I'll not argue with you, Hetty, for you have no right feeling for your mother; but I tell you, once for all, and you may as well make up your mind to it, you shall never become the wife of a man who has the blood of a Mulveil on his head, and that Mulveil your own cousin, not if he is the last man in the world!"



They had gone over that dialogue, with more or less unimportant variations and modifications, so many times that it seemed as if they were rehearsing something they meant to play by and by, when they both were "line-perfect." But they ended it variously; sometimes one, sometimes the other, and generally both, became angry. On this particular evening, Hetty vehemently declared that whatever her mother or anybody else might say to the contrary, she would marry John whenever he wanted her to.

"How do you know he wants you?" sneered the widow. "He didn't marry you when he had a chance to. Either he didn't want you, or he hadn't the proper spunk of a man. Either way, I wouldn't think much of him if I were in your place."

It was a cruel thrust, but the girl parried it as well as she could, tossing her head with an air of indifference and answering mysteriously:

"That is as far as you know about it. We had good reasons. We can afford to wait until we are ready."

"Ah! And a fine time he's having in the city while waiting, no doubt. He can afford to wait. It's an old girl you'll have got to be when he troubles himself about you again. You needn't look for him in a hurry."

"Old McFarlane's comin' up the lane, comin' a-courtin' mam," shouted Danny, in a sing-song tone, poking his grinning face in at the kitchen-door.



"Get out, you shameless young villain!" cried Mrs. Mulveil, making a feint of throwing at his head the heavy candle-molds into which she had just drawn a set of wicks.

The lad fled, chuckling and humming: "Comin' a-courtin' mam," up to his garret den, as the old lady sprang to her feet, exclaiming:

"Drat the man! What does he want to come here for? The idea! Come, and do up my hair, Hetty. I declare, this sun-bonnet pulls it every which way. He's a nuisance; but one must be civil to neighbors. Get me a clean collar out of the upper bureau-drawer. There! That's him rapping at the front door, now! Run and let him in!"

Hetty admitted Mr. McFarlane, greeting him pleasantly, for she liked the plain, unaffected, simple-minded old fellow who almost worshiped John, and, having seated him in the parlor, returned to assist at her mother's toilet. The widow's tongue ran on as if she felt it incumbent upon her to discover some reason, other than the real one, for her visitor's coming, but she lowered her tone.

"I suppose he's come to see about seeding down the old fallow-field in winter wheat on shares, this fall. He said something about it the last time he was over."

"He evidently does not believe in postponing things until the last moment."

"Or, maybe he has made up his mind to give what I asked for the two-year-old steers."



A spirit of mischief, akin to that possessing her brother, suddenly inspired Hetty to whisper in her mother's ear, with an affected intensity of utterance :

"Danny and I are going to have some fun with him !"

The widow's blood ran cold.

"Oh !" she gasped in horror ; but before she could find breath to protest against and sternly forbid all fun with Mr. McFarlane, Hetty had fled, and would not be summoned back.

Outside the kitchen door, Hetty was speedily joined by Danny, who glided down from his loft as soon as his mother had gone to receive Mr. McFarlane in the parlor.

"Say, Hetty," he demanded, with an air of mysterious excitement, "you're going to church to-morrow, ain't you ?"

"No ; I'm not," she replied curtly. Staying away from church on Communion Sabbath seemed to her a sort of protest against fate. And why should she go to church when John would not be there ?

"Oh ! But—say, sis ; you'll miss lots of fun if you don't go—only, if you do, you want to sit near the door."

"What mischief are you up to now ?"

"Cross your heart you'll never tell ?"

She laughingly made the gesture and repeated the formula "Hope-I-may-never-s'help-me !" which, in boyish estimation, was equivalent to



an affidavit, and Danny, feeling that his secret was safe, went on :

“ Me and Sam Bingham—”

“ Yes—always when there’s any deviltry afloat it’s you and Sam Bingham. I wonder if you two will go to the penitentiary together.”

“ Never you mind about that! ’Taint your put-in! Jes’ listen! Me and Sam Bingham have got the biggest kind of a hornet’s nest out in the barn. We found it in the woods, more’n two weeks ago, and have been savin’ it up. Last night we plugged up the mouth of it, cut off the limb it was on, and brung it home.”

“ A hornet’s nest! Mercy! Why don’t you burn the horrid thing at once?”

“ Burn it? I guess not! I haven’t had a mite of fun since I smoked out the singing-school with red-pepper on the stove, and you bet I’m not going to burn any hornet’s nest when I can stir up a whole community with it. Burn that nest, with more’n a thousand or a million lively hornets in it! Not if I know myself!”

“ Well, what are you going to do with it?”

“ We can crawl under the church, and we’ve found a loose board that we can shove up under the pulpit. To-morrow morning, long before anybody else gets there, we’re going to poke the hornet’s nest up under the pulpit, with a long string tied to the plug in its mouth and carried away outside and hid in the grass, so that we can pull out the plug when we think it’s a good



time. The lower part of the pulpit, you know, between its floor and the floor of the church, is closed in with criss-crossed laths, with little square holes between them, so that when you're under there you can see out, and if meetin' was in, you could see Deacon Hill's bald head shining like a varnished pumpkin. Well, say, sis, I bet when there's a hornet coming out of every one of those holes, a good many of them will see nothing but that bald head, and think of nothin' but jabbin' it. They'll be fightin' mad, every last one of 'em, and, great Scott, how they'll make that congregation get up and dust! That's why I said you'd better sit near the door."

"Oh, Danny, it would be a horribly wicked thing to do! Just think how many folks would be stung! Why, it would break up the meeting!"

"Knock the meetin' sky high, sure enough; but just think what fun it'll be to see 'em scramblin' and clawin' to get out of the doors and windows; and old Mr. McLeod will get his dose, I'll bet! They'll make him dance worse'n he made me the time he curled his black-snake whip around my legs!"

"You had no right to take his colt out of the pasture to run races."

"Great Scott, Hetty! A fellow might as well die if he isn't to do anything but what he has a right to. It's the things you haven't a right to that you get most fun out of always."

"If you act up to that, Danny, you will be not



only a bad boy but a very wicked man when you grow up."

"Oh, well, I don't mean anything serious, you know, but just fun."

"Turning those hornets loose in church would be very serious and not at all funny for the folks who got stung, and you must not do it. I will not allow it."

"You won't! I don't guess you can stop me. Ain't they my hornets? Suppose I had the idea of making pets of them and have changed my mind, and being a very kind-hearted boy, I choose to give the poor insects their liberty."

"But not in church."

"Why not? Isn't that a good place? Isn't Mr. McLeod just the right man to tackle them? The last time he saw me in church, he preached about Elijah and the bears and the boys, and he looked square at me, as if he wished he could feed me to a bear. But he'd better go to training on little things like hornets for a while before he begins ordering bears around."

"If you don't give up the awfully wicked idea, Danny, I'll tell on you and have it stopped. I really must. I wouldn't have such a thing on my conscience."

"Oh! Indeed! After you've crossed your heart you wouldn't tell! A nice, soft, tender, mushy sort of conscience you must have! Just work it on your own affairs and let mine alone. I never did anything as mean as you have."



"Why, Danny! What did I ever do?"

"You coaxed John Cameron to run off with you and then wouldn't marry him, just to make a fool of him. And it's on your account he stays away so long."

The cruel allegation that it was her own fault she was not long since John Cameron's wife—all the more hard to bear for having a spice of truth in it—quite overcame her. Turning her back upon the boy, without reply, she walked out to the front gate and stood leaning over it, lost in reverie tinged with regret. Danny ran up to the garret over the parlor, "to see how Scotchy was getting along with mam."

The worthy Mr. McFarlane's getting along was due to no endeavor of his own. He simply allowed himself to drift on the current of conversational circumstance. Luckily for him, the widow had no mind to see the bark of his evident good intentions wrecked for lack of piloting. Love-making may be either the evolution of impulse or the product of art. The period of youth, when impulse inspires that efflorescence of the inexperienced soul, Roger had passed through safely, without even a temptation in that direction disturbing his serene devotion to the acquisition of a competence. And the engrossing cares and settled habits of his maturer years had left no place in his life for cultivation of that alluring but dangerous branch of art. The methods of courtship were as unknown to



him as those of the higher mathematics. By cautious experiment and rehearsal before his mirror, he had learned to assume an expression of countenance that seemed to him very affectionate, even languishing, and, having tried its effect upon the widow, he flattered himself that she had caught a correct understanding of it. With the exception of his occasional employment of that expression at stated intervals, his visits to Mrs. Mulveil were as devoid of sentimental demonstration as were the official calls of the assessor of taxes.

Seated at a respectful distance from the buxom widow, Mr. McFarlane talked. It could not be said that he "kept the conversational ball rolling." That phrase conveys altogether too forceful an idea. Rather his talk flowed mild, persistent and a little muddy. Weather, crops, his farm improvements, and the doctrine of regeneration by grace were his staple themes, interspersed with casually remembered fragments of such meager news of the day as might have come to his knowledge.

Hetty's reverie was suddenly broken by an eager clutch upon her arm and Danny's voice excitedly whispering in her ear:

"Say, sis; I ain't going to touch off the congregation with them hornets."

"I'm glad you are not, Danny. I hoped you would see the wickedness of it, when you came to think."



“ Oh, wickedness nothin' ! It ain't that. But John Cameron will be at church to-morrow, and I don't want him stung.”

“ John will be at church to-morrow ! How do you know that ?”

“ Just heard old McFarlane tell mam. Uncle Dave Henderson brought him home to-day. That was what made me change my mind.”

“ And I've changed my mind, too, Danny ; you dear, good boy. I'll go to church to-morrow.”







## CHAPTER XXII.

### WHOLESALE MATRIMONY.

For the first time in almost half a century, Mrs. Mulveil looked with suspicion upon the honest face of the tall clock in the corner of the sitting-room. Long ago, it had taken to running the lunar changes in a spasmodic, fantastic and untrammelled fashion peculiarly its own, and she could hardly remember when it might be depended upon for the day of the month, but its approximate reliability as a timekeeper had become a matter of faith with her. This Sunday morning, however, its hands pointed to half-past seven, when her feelings, the length of the shadows and the dew on the grass all told her the hour was not yet more than half-past five. Happily, she did not suspect Danny of having suborned the aged witness to deceive her. Hetty did, however, gratefully, and furthered his impatient desires, with which her own were in harmony, by pretending unimpaired confidence in the veracity of the clock and arguing



that it would be better to trust to it, even if by so doing they were brought somewhat early to meeting, rather than run the risk of arriving there after everybody else. The result was that the chores were hurriedly performed, breakfast hastily dispatched, and the widow Mulveil's old "dearborn" was the first vehicle drawn under the maple grove surrounding the church that communion-Sabbath morn.

But hardly had it taken the choicest location for hitching—near the spring and where the horses would be under shade all day—when there were more early comers, and by the time the sexton appeared to open the church-doors, a dozen families had arrived, among them the deacons, whose duty it was to set the communion-tables.

Rapidly then the throng increased. The occasion was one that never failed to bring out not only the congregation but practically every person able to come from miles around, and from each of the three convergent roads came dusty equestrians and crowded carry-alls, dearborns, wagons and buggies almost in processional form, until the available space under the grove and in the forest belt flanking it was filled, and saddle-horses were hitched all along two sides of the graveyard fence beyond. Stalwart men, plump, smiling matrons, irrepressible boys and pretty girls, roseate with health and sparkling with gentle excitement, thronged the scene; kindly



greetings, cheery salutations, the jingle of harness and the neighing of horses stirred the lazy echoes; the air was full of the fresh smell of trampled grass and the perfume of apple-blossoms and bunches of heliotrope carried by the girls.

Mrs. Cameron and Mary Elder came in a buggy, with John and Uncle David riding on horseback alongside. Some dark looks were directed toward the young man by the most ill-conditioned of the Mulveil faction, but among the sensible majority the old feud was becoming unpopular, and whatever feeling against him existed was personal, on Constable Simeon's account, because of the misconception of fact truthfully reported to him by Uncle David. Each scowling face he met, however, was offset by a score glowing with smiles of unfeigned pleasure at his return, and so many hands clasped his in hearty welcome that, though his eyes and Hetty's met, he could not manage to get near her before the bell rang summoning all to divine service.

The Rev. Mr. McLeod's morning sermon—rather shorter than usual and appropriate to the occasion—was followed by the simple but impressive ceremonial in commemoration of the Last Supper.

Before the pulpit stood a long, narrow table, draped with a snowy linen cloth, upon which rested a great chalice and a broad plate, both of



solid silver and antique form, each covered by a white napkin. Plain benches extended along the sides of the table.

While the whole assemblage joined in singing the Twenty-fourth Psalm, members of the congregation arose from their places in the pews and went forward to the table until the benches were filled. After a short prayer in consecration of the elements, the minister uncovered the eucharistic vessels and, himself first partaking of the bread piled upon the plate and touching his lips to the wine in the cup, passed them successively to the deacons, who carried them along the lines of the communicants, presenting them in turn to each.

By tacit understanding and established custom, the older members of the congregation occupied seats at the first table. Side by side among them, at this time, sat Mrs. Cameron and Mrs. Mulveil. Their hands touched in taking the consecrated bread; their eyes met, and they smiled kindly upon each other; for with the suddenness of the lightning's flash the solemn rite thrilled in their hearts a common chord. How many years they had sat together at the Lord's table, side by side with the dear ones long since gone to the farther shore! How few times more, at most, might they hope to meet here, ere they too would be summoned to cross the dark river! Were they not sisters in affliction—sisters in love and Christian hope?



Though there were many present who had not yet formally united themselves to the congregation by profession of faith, and who consequently did not partake of the communion, enough members presented themselves to fill the tables a second and a third time.

While the second table was being filled, a late-comer, a large, heavy man, roughly clad and wearing a great beard, entered the church. He came in at the backs of the congregation, while all were intent upon the ceremony in front, sank quietly into a seat by the door and altogether escaped observation. Near the end of the services he glided out and disappeared.

According to immemorial custom, there were two long services in the observance of communion Sabbath. The first was devoted to the commemorative rite, already outlined, but the second had no distinctive or peculiar features, being merely according to the routine followed upon other Sundays, except that perhaps the sermon was a little longer than usual. Between the two there was necessarily a "recess," of from one to two hours, for rest and refreshment. During that time, the vicinity of the church presented the unique spectacle of a pious picnic. Each family brought along an ample store of substantial cold provisions and toothsome delicacies, which were appetizingly offered upon table-cloths spread on the grass, or, less ostentatiously but perhaps as satisfactorily, devoured



by handfuls from baskets in the wagons and around the spring. There was always more than enough for all, and persons who came on horseback—and consequently without any commissary department of their own—were welcome anywhere and everywhere. It was observable that the families having the prettiest girls were most called upon for hospitality by the equestrians, who were generally young men and bachelors.

When the morning service ended, Uncle David Henderson had some difficulty in keeping John Cameron at his side until the Reverend Mr. McLeod came to them, and, after a cordial greeting, led the way into the graveyard as the most convenient place for an uninterrupted private conversation. There, laying his hand upon the young man's shoulder, the minister said :

“I told Uncle David, the day before yesterday, that I wanted you brought home at once. But I did not tell him why. The pleasure of that I reserved for myself. In the first place, I want to mention to you that I have recovered my watch.”

“Your watch !”

“Yes. The one you found on the Devil's Backbone was mine. And the spoons that were with it have been restored to their owner, my old friend, Mrs. Billings, who lives over on the Canonsburg turnpike. This restitution was



made by a repentant thief, a poor fellow who, in dire distress, succumbed to temptation, but who is, I think, at heart an honest man. He wished, before dying, to prevent the possibility of unjust suspicion putting a stain upon the good name of one who has been, he says, kinder to him than any other man ever was. Do you know whom I mean, John?"

"I think I do, sir. It was Billy the Barker, was it not?"

"Yes, that is what he was called when you met him. I first knew him, however, when he was an unhappy, starving colporteur, as William Simmons, and that, he assures me, is his real name."

"Where is he now?"

"At my house, which I fear he will never leave alive. He suffers much and is very far gone, wanders in his head a good deal, and at such times talks only of you and of his children and wife. Poor fellow! His pilgrimage has been a sad one, but it is nearly ended."

"Then it is probable that Sim Mulveil really had a warrant for John, on account of those things?" suggested Uncle David.

"Yes. He was, no doubt, deceived by misinformation, and, honestly believing he was doing his duty as an officer of the law, went to his death in trying to execute that warrant. I hope you do not cherish any ill feeling toward his memory on that account, John."



"I certainly do not, sir. I never looked upon Sim as an enemy of mine, and I am sincerely sorry for him. He was an honest man, who tried to do what he thought was right, and if he made a mistake now and then, it is no more than most of us are liable to."

"I wish," growled Uncle David, "that it could be got out of the fool heads of some of these Mulveils that John is in some way responsible for Sim's death."

"I guess I can knock that idea out better than anybody else," suddenly interpolated the big stranger who had for a short time appeared in the church, now rising from behind a clump of elder-bushes, where he had been lying in the grass, an involuntary listener to their conversation.

"Sim Mulveil!" exclaimed together the three men to whom he presented himself.

"That's me!" he responded with a grin.

"And you were not drowned?"

"Not enough to stay drowned. It was a pretty close call, though. After we went through the ice, the first I knew I was being rolled on a barrel, on my stomach, aboard a tug-boat going down the Ohio, and I learned that somebody with a boat-hook had snaked me out of the river below the Point, where the channel was open. When I came to, I felt sort of disgusted with things generally, including myself, and instead of coming back, I just kept on going. The tug-



boat went no farther than Steubenville, to get a barge. I got a job on a river-steamer and kept on down to Cincinnati and from there to New Orleans. I don't know as I would ever have come back, but I got a good chance to invest some money and recollected that I have a farm and a mill here to sell. And, in coming back, the thing that has worried me most has been what it was my duty to do about that warrant I had for John Cameron. I had sworn it out myself, on 'information and belief,' but I never really believed he was guilty. I guess rum gave me a good many of my bad ideas in those days, and Rufe Goldie was— But, pshaw! There's no use throwing blame off on a dead man. I deserved to be drowned, on my own account. Well, to get back to the warrant: I didn't know whether I ought to arrest John and give him a chance to clear himself, or just let the whole business die out. But it never would really die out, so long as the record stood on the squire's books that there was a warrant out against him for theft. It worried me, I tell you, and I came here to-day mainly in the hope of meeting John and arranging with him to do as he might think best in the matter. And now that it is settled as it is, I'm as right-down glad of it as you can be yourself, John Cameron."

He and John shook hands heartily, and the constable asked:

"How's your wife?"



John reddened and, with an embarrassed air, replied :

“ I haven’t got any.”

“ What! Didn’t you and Hetty Mulveil run off to Pittsburg and get married?”

“ We eloped, it is true ; but the belief that you had lost your life and the notion that I was somehow to blame for it that you had put a temporary stop to the proceedings. Hetty is still Hetty Mulveil, but I don’t mean she shall be much longer, please God.”

“ Well, Sim Mulveil—count him dead or count him alive—won’t stand in your way any more, my boy. Maybe you didn’t know it, but I had a sort of hankering notion after her once, myself. But I’ve got all over that. The river soaked a good deal of the dum foolishness out of me. I’m too old for her. She doesn’t care for me. And I’ve got other projects than marrying, anyway. So, if the old woman is as cross-grained and ram-bunctious about it as she used to be, I’ll do what I can to fetch her around and fix you all right.”

“ And I think it is high time I began looking after my interests,” exclaimed Mr. McLeod with a jocose affectation of anxiety. “ I didn’t know until now, John, that you had run away to be married. How that secret has been kept beats me ; and I am shocked at the idea of my legitimate business leaving me in such a way. How could you do such a thing, John?”

“ Indeed, I never wanted to, sir. It was all



her mother's fault, and you mustn't blame me even if I have to do it again."

"Oh, but I will! Come along, and let us see if, with Simeon's influence to help us, we cannot bring the old lady to terms."

"If John can make sure of the girl, all four of us ought to be more than a match for her mother," laughed Uncle David.

A more utterly amazed woman than Mrs. Mulveil, when they presented themselves before her, it would be difficult to imagine. She had just got her collation spread out on the grass, and Mr. Roger McFarlane, her guest, was carving a roast chicken with a dexterous grace that was her admiration, when the minister's salutation of her by name claimed her attention, and, looking up, she beheld before her the face of the supposed drowned man Simeon.

Of course, as a preliminary to all else, he had to tell over again the story of his escape, and, as she constantly interrupted him with exclamations and questions, the narration took more time than when it was made before. As may be supposed, that opportunity was not neglected by John and Hetty, who withdrew themselves a little from the group to exchange fervid assurances of undiminished reciprocal affection and renew their vows of immutable constancy. Finally, he said to her:

"You promised me in Pittsburg that when I



came for you and said the word you would marry me. Didn't you?"

"Yes, John."

"Well, I'm here, and the word is *now*. We have come to settle this business at once."

"Oh!" was all she could find breath to say.

At that moment Cousin Simeon finished his story, and John, stepping forward and addressing himself to Hetty's mother, said:

"Mrs. Mulveil, I love Hetty, and Hetty loves me, we are going to be married and would like to have your consent, if you have no objections."

"John Cameron," she replied, deliberately, "I've no doubt you are as good as the general run of young men nowadays and mean all you say; but I have said and declared that Hetty should not marry you."

"Yes, I know you have, but no matter about that. What do you say now?"

"Oh, I do assure you, Mrs. Mulveil," exclaimed Mr. McFarlane, "John is much more than as good as the general run of young men. He's verra much better; in fact, quite superior; a most worthy young man and well-to-do. I'll vouch for him, and I do hope you'll give your consent—for my sake," he added, in a whisper, slyly pressing her hand.

The minister, Uncle David and Simeon, each in turn, added his arguments and solicitations to influence her, with such earnestness and volubil-



ity as quite dazed her, and she stared helplessly at them, from one to another. In point of fact they were wasting their efforts. A kindlier feeling than she had known in years had been in her heart ever since that touch of Mrs. Cameron's hand at the communion-table, and the matter was as good as settled when Mr. McFarlane asked it, for his sake; but they gave her no opportunity to tell them so until they had overwhelmed her with their competitive eloquence. They would not let her say that she had recently changed her mind. Indeed, the minister, having got his second wind, was starting in afresh when she reached out for John and Hetty, caught one of them with each hand and banged them together, exclaiming:

"There! There! Take her before they talk the head off of me! I hope you're all satisfied now!"

Hearty laughter, congratulations and expressions of good wishes all around followed. Then John, taking Hetty's hand, drew her up to his left side in front of the minister, saying:

"Now! Go ahead!"

"Hold on! Hold on! Wait a minute!" protested Uncle David.

"You're always wanting us to wait!" objected John. "What's the matter with you now?"

"Only wait a moment until I come back! Keep your places!" answered the giant, hurriedly trotting away.



While they were still wondering what new notion possessed him, he returned, almost out of breath, bringing with him John's mother and demure little Miss Mary Elder. To the latter he said :

"Last night you gave me your promise that you would become my wife at the same time Hetty married John. According to the terms of that agreement, you have less than two minutes to remain Mary Elder."

"Oh! But—good gracious, Mr. Henderson! I never dreamed of anything so sudden as this!"

"You surely would not attempt to set up your lack of prevision as a bar to fulfillment of your part in a deliberately made contract?"

"N-n-no."

"Then take your place here beside me. That's right. Now go on, Mr. McLeod."

"Wait a moment," interposed Mr. McFarlane.

"Everybody wants us to wait!" complained John to Hetty. "It looks like a conspiracy."

"Only for a moment, John," pleaded the Scotchman.

"In view of what was settled between us last night, Mrs. Mulveil, don't you think we might as well follow what appears to be a contagious example, and avail ourselves of at least as good an opportunity as we will ever have in our lives?"

"Oh, Mr. McFarlane!" protested the widow.



“How would it look for me to be married at the same time as my daughter?”

“It would look as if your daughter were being married at the same time as yourself,” he replied.

“Lucid as King James and true as Bobby Burns!” exclaimed Uncle David. “You may as well fall into line, Mrs. Mulveil, and let me be the last one who calls you that.”

So she did; and in short order the Reverend Mr. McLeod performed what he ever after characterized as “the largest wholesale matrimonial job” he had ever done in one day.

Fortunate matches all three proved, for each couple was well mated, and in the light of their happiness the last clouds of The Old Grudge between the Mulveils and the Camerons faded forever away.

THE END.







# WORKING THE ORACLE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE COY WIDOW.

Doubtless, if M. Anatole Duprez had not removed to those new apartments in the Rue Fontenelle, he might have continued indefinitely the careless and joyous existence that had been his ever since he became of age and entered into possession of his patrimony, seven years before.

When Fate first noticed Anatole, handsome, happy, lucky and thoughtless, she said to herself: "There is no merit in trapping this young fellow; his capture will be too easy: but, just to jostle him a little with the idea that something can happen to him, he must have a small tumble."



So she set for him a very tempting little pitfall in the Rue Fontenelle.

The pitfall was matrimony, and its excellent bait was the fascinating young widow, Mme. Natalie Girard, who had, however, no consciousness of or desire for being a bait. In fact, she had, thanks to experience and discretion, decided prejudices against matrimony. Madame Cantillac, her mother, had successfully dragooned her into marrying Monsieur Girard, a worthy exporter of sardines, oil and olives, who was too stout to be agile, too red to be handsome and too old to be attractive, but whose wealth made him desirable—in the mother's eyes exclusively. But Fate, foreseeing other and better uses for pretty Madame Girard, took care that the overripe exporter should step into an apoplexy pitfall within a year after his marriage; and Madame Cantillac had by this time gone where she could no longer dragoon anybody, except, perhaps, through table-tipping and *planchette*, which must seem exasperatingly insufficient means to any strong-minded ghost. So the widow Girard was the happily independent possessor of a very handsome fortune, sufficient to last her well all her life if she did not throw it away upon some scapegrace of a second husband, a thing she was quite resolved would not happen.

Truly, Anatole was right in considering her the most delicious of all captivating widows, as he did the moment his eyes rested upon her.



They met at the foot of the stairs when he was coming in and she was going out to a carriage waiting for her at the curb. He stood aside, with his hat raised, as she passed, and still continued standing in the same attitude, without being aware of it, until the sound of her carriage-wheels could no longer be heard.

"He stares at me as if he thought I was lost property of his," thought the lively widow, as she sank back among the cushions. Then she dismissed his existence from her memory.

But Anatole did not so easily, or, indeed, at all, disembarrass his mind of that seductive vision of loveliness. Naturally, he addressed himself to the *concierge*, whose duty it is to know all about everybody in the house and who can be relied upon to tell a little, all or much more than he knows, according as he is paid.

"The lady," said the *concierge*, this time confining himself to the truth, "is Madame Natalie Girard, who, with her maid Amandine—who has black eyes and is very saucy—occupies the apartments beneath those of monsieur. I need not observe that she is pretty, since the fact has probably not escaped monsieur's notice. There is good reason to believe she is rich, and, although a widow, her conduct is unexceptionable. Very respectable people call upon her, in their own carriages, and, though she has lived here nearly two years, with her maid, as I have told you, I have never seen any one shake the head



and smile when her name was mentioned. Your predecessor in your apartments, who was a prominent official in a railway company, made the most herculean efforts to cultivate an acquaintance with her and was so much disgusted with his entire lack of success that he moved away. No; I am sure she does not receive any gentleman who pays court to her. Amandine, who is a very roguish girl, avers that her mistress thinks of entering a convent; but I believe, if she does, it will only be on a visit. She is still too young and pretty to contemplate wasting herself."

That evening, contrary to his habit, Anatole remained at home. He felt a disinclination for going out, notwithstanding he knew very agreeable friends would be surprised by his non-appearance in his usual haunts. It seemed to him pleasanter to stay, at least, under the same roof with the widow and cogitate upon schemes likely to be more successful than those of the discomfited railway official. And, as the evening wore on, he became conscious of proceedings in the apartments beneath him, which claimed his interest.

Madame Girard was having a little reception. His attention was first called to it by the rattle of wheels and stamping of horses' hoofs in the ordinarily quiet street. Then, as he looked to discover the cause of that noise, he saw a bright illumination glowing out on the night from her



open windows. Sitting on his own window-sill, he could hear much of what was going on below him and follow pretty correctly the progress of events. The courteous greetings of guests, murmurs of compliment and buzz of general conversation floated up to him. He knew a game of *écarté* was going on in a cool corner close by a window. There was music, different persons playing, not all badly, upon the piano, and some one—he was sure it must be the widow—singing deliciously an aria from “Carmen.” That pure, sweet voice not only charmed his senses but seemed to delight his very soul. Afterward, there were rattlings of cups and saucers and tinklings of glasses; finally, a little dancing, and then, at a sedately early and proper hour, the guests went away.

The next morning, he knew he was right in supposing Madame Girard the charming singer of that aria. She was up early and caroling like a bird when he awoke.

At the same hour the widow had gone riding the afternoon before, a carriage appeared at the door. Anatole, whose hope had been prescient, was ready to grasp the opportunity which he imagined presented itself and nimbly ran down the stairs to the front door before Madame Girard emerged from her apartments. There he listened for her descent and timed his return so well that again he met her, exactly at the foot of the stairs, as if by accident. He raised his hat,



bowing elaborately. She looked at him in cold surprise and went on her way.

Anatole was not accustomed to being snubbed by pretty women, and the novel experience confused him. He felt himself blushing—actually blushing, under the sarcastic smile of the *concierge*, who was looking on, and with a weak pretense of carrying the matter off easily remarked:

“I have forgotten my cigar-case.”

The excuse compelled him to re-ascend to his room. In a few moments he came down again, affecting to settle the cigar-case—where it had been all the while—in a breast-pocket, and walked away, nonchalantly as he could. And in his heart he knew the *concierge* behind him was grinning and probably saying to himself: “The railroad official also tried that.” And, indeed, that was exactly what the *concierge* was recalling, with the further reflections: “And, next, he, too, will be sending her flowers. It is singular how monotonously alike the actions of young men are.” The fellow’s foresight was as good as his memory.

It was not in the character of a son of the gallant Gen. Antoine Duprez to be discouraged by a single rebuff or even by a succession of them. Obstacles only stimulated Anatole’s ardor to overcome them, and he consoled himself by reflecting that it is precisely those women most worth winning who are with most difficulty won. An easy conquest is not a satisfying assur-



ance to the philosophic mind contemplating matrimony, and that extreme step, really matrimony, with the pretty widow Girard as its object, was what the young man already seriously had in view. But it was not easy for him to determine upon the next step of the siege. Another false one was to be dreaded. And he felt himself lamentably deficient of experience in the courting of shy widows. If it had been a question of approaching Mademoiselle Coralie or the little Nanon, he would have commenced by sending a bouquet, to be followed by bonbons, with some pretty jewel or trinket in the box, sufficient to stir an appetite for more. But, just because that would be the correct course in those cases, it did not seem suitable to the present emergency.

Eventually he decided, not without considerable dubitation, however, that, so far as the flowers went, that line of attack would do; and the manner of their reception would have to determine whether further advances should be in accordance with such precedents as he possessed or by some other and at present undiscoverable method. So he procured a handsome bouquet, and, when in possession of it, found himself in a new quandary: Whether he might, or might not venture to attach his card to it. Reverting to precedent, he reflected that, Coralie or Nanon would have expected to see a card; therefore there should be none in sending to the widow.



Beyond the primary step of the flowers themselves—flowers being supposably pleasing to all women—it would perhaps be prudent to just follow the rule of reversing all the precedents, in making advances to Madame Girard.

The *concierge* delivered the beautiful bouquet at Madame Girard's door, while she was out, only to have it returned to him by Amandine immediately upon her mistress's return home, with the message that "Madame does not receive flowers from unknown persons."

"Come to think about it," said Anatole, to himself, "it was a stupidity to send a bouquet in that fashion. How could she know it did not come from the obnoxious railway official?"

So, the next day, he sent to her a magnificent bunch of fragrant and beautiful exotics, accompanied by his card, but the response was even worse, being more personal than that elicited by the first offering. Amandine carried them back to the *concierge*, with the message: "Madame does not receive flowers from gentlemen with whom she is unacquainted."





## CHAPTER II.

### THE WAY OF THE SAGE.

“ I believe,” said Anatole to himself, “ that in so extraordinary a case as this I might do well to consult Monsieur Rochecourt.”

It was an excellent idea. Monsieur Rochecourt enjoyed and deserved the reputation of having, during his fifty years of bachelorhood, entertained an infinite number of theories about women and of putting them all to practical test—with the natural exception of such as would have involved matrimony. A prudent man must set some limit to his enthusiasm for experiment. But as years wore on, and his hair wore off, the old gentleman gradually relinquished this fascinating branch of study. Now, he was rarely to be seen anywhere else than at the club, where he was content to be the mentor of the rising generation of experimentalists. When M. Anatole Duprez solicited his advice, having made a



full statement of the case, the man of much experience said :

“ You have demonstrated too much ardor. She has been perfectly aware of you from your first meeting and doubtless knows a great deal more about you already than you possibly can, or, perhaps, ever will, know about her. But your advances, by their boldness and persistence, awake in her a reaction of antagonism. She is one who values herself too highly to be taken by storm. And she does not value a conquest that is made too easily any more than you yourself would. Her pride must be piqued and her curiosity excited. If possible, you must make her say to herself : ‘ I am not so sure I have captivated this young man ; he seems capable of turning his back upon me.’ She will not be content until she has assured herself of the power of her fascinations, once she feels it a matter of question. As you affect to retreat she will advance, until, without being aware of it, her toe crosses the boundary line beyond which turning back will be at least difficult. Cease, for a few days at least, paying the slightest attention to her. You will see that she will very soon seek to reclaim the interest she has already learned to expect.”

In compliance with that sage advice, the young man, during three or four days, kept out of the widow's way and, of course, refrained from floral tributes. Then, one morning, his valet Josef said to him with a sly smile :



"Mademoiselle Amandine, the maid of our neighbor below, has been questioning me concerning monsieur."

"Ah, I am flattered! Amandine is sufficiently pretty to merit a reciprocation of interest."

"Does monsieur wish to torture me with jealousy?" exclaimed Josef, in mock-heroic style.

"No, you rogue!" laughed his master. "But what else am I to suppose?"

"That mademoiselle is a charming variety of that new American instrument into which one talks that it may repeat what has been said."

"And her interest in me is purely vicarious?"

"I am interested in believing so, sir."

"Oho! The maid pleases your fancy, Josef?"

"As much as the mistress does that of monsieur?"

"I hope you find her complaisant."

"Maids are apt to be imitative. Until to-day, Mademoiselle Amandine was very coy."

"From which you infer—"

"That the wind sits from another quarter in the sails of madame, also."

"Aha! Already? Well, what did she wish to know about me?"

"All things. From the time monsieur was in long clothes, I believe. I told her you were the only son of the brave General Duprez, from whom you had inherited a couple of millions—"

"The deuce! You were piling it on rather heavy, my friend."



“ I have always found that judicious in dealing with the sex, monsieur. They are inclined to be skeptical, and it is necessary to discount in advance the reductions they are sure to make upon what we tell them. I also told her that by judicious investments in solid commercial enterprises you had largely increased your fortune and were daily becoming more wealthy.”

“ But, rascal, if I hold my own, I consider I'm doing very well.”

“ So do I, sir ; but madame's wealth has been acquired in trade, with which she must be more or less familiar, and, consequently, accumulation has a certain fascination for her, no doubt. Then, again, a young man's attention to serious business encourages the assumption that he is 'steady'—a quality for which widows have a favorable prejudice.”

“ When you leave off service, Josef, will you be a diplomat or a philosopher ?”

“ Neither, monsieur. I shall keep a cabaret, if I can persuade Mademoiselle Amandine to become my cashier.”

“ And what did you tell her of my habits ?”

“ All that monsieur would desire to have believed true.”

“ A diplomatic answer. Let it go at that. And did not Mademoiselle Amandine have anything to say in exchange for your veracious confidences ?”

“ A great deal, sir. Of course, I scaled her



statements. Madame Girard is twenty-four years old."

"Scaled or unscaled?"

"Duly scaled, sir. Amandine said twenty-one, and I add three."

"What is your rule?"

"Under twenty-two, avowed, add three; from twenty-two to twenty-five, add five; from twenty-five to thirty, add ten. Beyond that, computations are useless."

"You are about right. Go on."

"Madame has an income of seventy-five thousand francs per annum, unscaled. We will put that down at say fifty thousand. Madame has had a husband—"

"No scaling on that."

"No, sir. Only the one. I think that is right. Finally, madame has the temper of an angel, the virtue of a vestal, the accomplishments of a paragon, and her personal charms are real."

"All that, I am confident, is quite true."

"Yet, considerably scaled down, I assure you, sir, from the maid's representations."

"She must have given it to you pretty strong."

"Naturally, she would not let herself be excelled."

"I blush to think how you must have painted me. But—will it all lead to anything?"

"That depends upon you, sir."

"Indeed!"



“Amandine said to me : ‘Why does not monsieur obtain an introduction to madame in a formal way. He surely is acquainted with some one who knows her.’”

“Josef, I deserve to be kicked for not having thought of that before. I consider myself kicked. But how am I to tell who knows her?”

“Ah! Amandine was prepared to smooth away that obstacle. She had in her possession the list of those invited to her mistress’s next Thursday-evening reception—‘quite accidentally,’ she said—and permitted me to copy it. Here it is.”

Anatole gave but one glance at it, when he muttered a cry of exultation and, slapping his thigh, exclaimed :

“Bah! Why, it is of all things the most easy! Here is the name of worthy Monsieur Nerode, the morocco-leather merchant, in whose business I have an interest and who has known me all my life. Of course, he will present me.”

His happy expectation was realized. Monsieur Nerode presented him with all due formality, and Madame Girard’s manner was as gracious as he could have desired. At the same time, she caused him to feel himself a person just met for the first time and who, for aught she knew to the contrary, was only on a transient visit to the city. Only once was that enforced veil of oblivion lightly twitched aside for an instant from the face of the agitated past.



She had, when going to the piano, laid her bouquet upon a stand. After singing delightfully a sweet little Provençal ballad, as she was about to retake her flowers, Anatole anticipated her and, offering them, said :

“ Permit me.”

She took them, with just a single flash of merry recollection in her bright eyes, and he knew she thought of his two returned bouquets.

If he had thought her pretty in street costume, how infinitely more ravishing was her beauty in evening-dress. The dazzling whiteness of her exquisitely molded bust and arms and the fully revealed grace of her slender neck and admirably poised head were all fascinations only now possible of realization, in their perfection. Her face, too, had gained in character. In the roseate light reflected upon it by her broad hat, it was lovely, bewitching ; but now it showed much more—it had become *spirituelle*.

After that evening, Monsieur Duprez called very often upon Madame Girard and paid court to her ardently but with small success. She was very kind, but he could not melt that kindness into love. When he reproached her with coldness, she laughed.

“ See, Monsieur Duprez,” she said to him, “ from my childhood I remember having heard that straw fires blaze quickly and soon expire. So it is with hasty devotion and lightly sworn fidelity ; they do not last. The love you profess



for me is too young. It has not yet grown to an age of discretion. To hold it responsible would be cruel."

"Can you not read my devotion in my eyes?"

"To use a shop-keeper's metaphor, the paint of the sign is still too fresh ; it will rub off."

"Let the sight of your soul penetrate deeper than the sign in the eyes, and behold the goods within—the love for you which fills my heart."

"Age increases the value of sound goods."

"Ah, madame! Have you vowed not to accept my heart until it has become shop-worn?"







## CHAPTER III.

### THE ALARMING CRYSTAL BALL.

One day Amandine told Josef a frightful thing.

“Do you know, my dear,” she said to him, “I have something on my conscience?”

“Ah, you freeze my heart! I feared it. But—go on with your confession.”

“My confession? Are you crazy or laughing at me? In any case, do you think I would confess on myself? No, I confess on madame.”

“Ah, since it only concerns Monsieur Duprez, my mind is easy.”

“But, wretch that you are, will you keep still until I shall have told you? I am no doubt wrong in not having mentioned it before; with so good and generous a young man as monsieur, one deserves to be frank—and I have not been. But he shall know all before it is too late.”

“Heavens! I shudder for my master! What must follow an exordium like that? I am done shuddering—go on.”



“Josef, you are never serious, and that is sometimes wrong; now, for instance, since this is truly a grave matter. My mistress practices black magic!”

“Ah, bah! There is no such thing.”

“It is ignorant of you to say so; and ungallant, since I have affirmed it. It is as I tell you. She has a ball of crystal as big as my head, in which she summons up at will, by incantations, places, men, women, spirits, angels, devils—how do I know what all?—and talks with them. And she sees in it what anybody is doing anywhere, if she desires.”

“The deuce! That might be awkward, if true. But your condition alarms me, my pigeon. Do you often have spells of imagining things like that?”

“I imagine nothing. My mistress sees those things and describes them, so that I can almost see them myself. Sometimes, she says, perhaps I may, but I do not wish to. I am afraid of them. And, what is more dreadful yet, she has a machine which talks to her like a person—only a dead person.”

“Oh, that is very simple. It is, no doubt, one of those new American dolls. There is clock-work in its stomach, and it sings: ‘Mother, may I go out to swim?’”

“No, no! It is a machine, not at all like a doll, and it talks sensibly, much more so than you often do. I tell you it is a thing of magic. I do



not see why people should say there is no magic any more. Surely, there used to be a great deal. Every one knows that. And since it was once, why should it not be now? Tell me that, if you can, wise one."

"Well, what am I to do? Would you have me convene an ecclesiastical court? The church only takes official cognizance of the devil now. We men of science ignore him."

"That which you will do will be to solemnly warn your master. Put him on his guard. I wash my hands of all further responsibility, now that I have told you."

"Ah! My master knows already. I have heard him call her 'a little witch.'"

"Will you not be serious, Josef?"

"How can I be serious when the intoxication of joy at being near you makes me light-headed?"

"Then I shall leave you until you regain the normal heaviness of your head."

"No; stop! Don't go, Amandine, and I will jest no more. I'll tell my master what you say."

"But adjure him that he must not let madame know I have warned him. She might never forgive me. And tell him, if he wants proofs, he shall have them. If he desires it, I shall put him in a closet where he may see all, the next time madame makes her incantations."

"An airy closet, where he will not be overcome by the fumes of the brimstone when the demons come?"



"I have never smelled any brimstone—only heliotrope."

"Ah! Then they are, doubtless, good spirits. But how is he to know when the time will arrive?"

"Drop a long thread from one of your rear windows, so that it shall fall near a window of our kitchen, where I may reach it. When I see her making ready, I will give you a signal by pulling the thread, and, if he comes down, will admit him by the rear door. She always practices her magic in the forenoons."

"He will be sure to come; I will answer for that. Any excuse which affords an opportunity for seeing Madame Girard, under any circumstances, will be good for him. And where do I come in—I, your devoted Josef?"

"If you are very good, you may remain in the kitchen with me while monsieur is in the closet."

"Amandine, you have the word of a Josef that I shall be good—of a lover that I will come."

Josef duly reported to his master the strange story he had been told. Of course, he surmised the talking-machine was a phonograph, with which ingenious invention he had formed a slight and distant acquaintance at the time of the Exposition; but beyond that, Amandine's tale seemed mysterious and improbable to him. And Monsieur Anatole had very little more of either knowledge or opinion in the premises than his valet. But the matter was one demanding



investigation. That they fully agreed upon and made all ready for compliance with the girl's directions.

On the second morning thereafter, Josef, who already had long been sitting in a rear room, with the thread tied to his thumb, called excitedly to his master :

“ Monsieur ! The signal ! It is time ! ”

They hastened down stairs and were admitted by Amandine, who held a forefinger on her lips as a pantomimic injunction of silence. While Josef seated himself obediently and very willingly in the kitchen, the girl conducted Monsieur Anatole along an obscure passage-way to a large closet, which was pretty well lighted through a small square window high up in one of its walls.

She caused him to mount upon a stanch table placed beneath that little window and then left him alone. The scene upon which he gazed in the adjoining apartment was indeed a strange one.

Madame Girard was seated in an easy-chair, still in the act of comfortably adjusting herself before a small table covered and draped with black. She wore a loose wrapper of some soft, clinging white stuff, and her long, heavy hair fell unconfined upon her shoulders. On the table, an ebony pedestal supported, almost at the height of her eyes, a perfect sphere of rock crystal, not less than six inches in diameter. Beyond her, on another black table, stood a



phonograph. The walls of the small room were draped with dark-violet hangings, the somber hue of which seemed to absorb the light diffused directly above her head from a translucent globe, doubtless containing an incandescent electric lamp. Having placed herself to her satisfaction, she fixed her gaze intently upon the crystal ball and remained silent and motionless during several minutes.

Suddenly a small, shrill, penetrating voice broke the stillness with the words :

“ Well? What do you see? Tell me what you behold.”

The voice was not that of Madame Girard, yet seemed to resemble hers or, rather, to be a reminder of it. Anatole realized that she had, by some motion he had failed to observe, started the phonograph, which was speaking. Its demand reached her hearing as well as his, for she replied to it :

“ Nothing ; only clouds—slow, rolling clouds, without form, void and of uncertain tint, seeming to ceaselessly involve and evolve themselves.”

Anatole wondered that he could hear her soft, mellow voice so plainly, until he discovered that the little window through which he gazed was pendent from hinges at the top and had been cunningly swung a little way outward at the bottom, so that he was practically in the same room with her, so far as hearing and seeing were



concerned. Presently, the shrill little voice spoke again sharply, in a tone of command :

“ What do you see now ? Tell me ! ”

“ I see,” responded Madame Girard, speaking slowly and clearly, in a strangely mechanical way, however, “ a large room, with heavy crimson curtains draped closely over its two big windows. Between the windows is a tall mirror. There are two other mirrors, very large ones, on the side walls, opposite each other, in huge gilded frames. In the ornamentation of the walls and ceiling there is much gilding and color. The general effect is gaudy, tawdry, vulgar. The center of the room is occupied by a great round table, bearing a profusion of silverware, china, cut-glass and flowers. Covers are placed for eight persons.”

The hair of Anatole erected itself, while she went on in that unimpassioned and precise description as if she had been reading from an auctioneer's catalogue. He almost beheld the scene before him, as indeed he often had, for it was one familiar to him. She had relapsed into silence, while these thoughts agitated him, and he began to have a little hope that the inspiration had deserted her, when the evil-minded machine on her left again administered a prod of its vocal needle, summoning her :

“ Well. Continue. What else do you see ? Tell me ! You must speak ! I command it ! ”

“ You command anything ! ” thought Anatole,



in a rage. "I would kick out your insides if I could get at you!"

Madame Girard obediently continued:

"Four couples enter the room and take places at the table. Anatole is among them. A girl, whom he calls Nanon, is leaning on his arm—"

Anatole in his excitement, forgetting where he stood, gave a jump and knocked over a pitcher, which fell upon the floor with a great smash, that he thought, must alarm Madame Girard, and he gave one glance at her, thinking to then leap down and run, but, to his profound surprise, she seemed to have heard nothing. Evidently, she was conscious only of the voice of the machine and what she saw and heard in the crystal ball. He listened again as she went on:

"There is much jesting and laughing and frivolity. The tone of the young women is not demure."

She spoke with seeming reluctance, and her utterance, becoming slower and slower, ceased altogether with that gentle characterization of the demeanor of the young women, which, Anatole did not question, was well within bounds. He again ventured to hope she had run down—would not be able to report anything more. Alas! He had not taken into sufficient account the spur of that diabolical phonograph, which again compelled her by its abominable squeak of—



"Well; you have not finished. Go on! Tell me all! You must see and tell me!"

"Woe to him who invented you! Monster of impertinent curiosity!" ejaculated Anatole.

"There is champagne—and more champagne," resumed Madame Girard. "One of the young women sings a song. Much of it is an *argot* I do not understand. The others join in a chorus of: '*Tzing, la, la; tzing, la, la!*' to which they beat time with a rattle of knives and forks upon the plates and glasses. The chorus ends with '*Boum.*' Anatole does not pay an excessive attention to the young woman he calls Nanon. He becomes involved in a dispute with another man, concerning a race which is to come off. He makes a wager of a thousand francs that the horse Vencedor will win."

She had not stopped speaking or given any indication of doing so, when again the impatient mischief-making machine piped out, its voice mingling with hers:

"Well, go on! See more! Tell me all!"

That was just what she was doing, continuing without regard to it:

"Anatole rises and says he is going home. Nanon does not want him to go, but he persists. He and another gentleman depart. The six persons who remain join again in the chorus: '*Tzing, la, la!*' Anatole and his friend light cigars and stroll along the boulevard to his club."

"Ah, I breathe again!" exclaimed her auditor.



"Thank Heaven! It wasn't so very bad that time!"

She went on describing, with the same nicety of detail, his visit to his club, but, seeming to become exhausted, gradually ceased speaking and, as the phonograph no longer spurred her, appeared to sleep.

Anatole fled to his apartments.







## CHAPTER IV.

### BLACK MAGIC SIMPLIFIED.

The situation presented itself to Monsieur Duprez as one of horror, almost justifying despair. What prospect, he asked himself, would any young man have for marriage if the woman he sought were able to put his life under minute inspection in that appalling fashion? He did not believe he had been any worse than others; indeed, he flattered himself that, if there had been anything exceptional in his career, it had been on the side of propriety. And yet, what must be the view Madame Girard would take of it? Was there no way of putting a stop to her views? • Amandine was quite right in saying it was black magic—but black magic with modern scientific attachments. The crystal ball was old as thaumaturgy itself, and really seemed to have a good deal in it, notwithstanding the pooh-poohings of an enlightened age. But how had she been able to corrupt the young and presumably innocent phonograph, making it a partner in her eerie cantraps? The problem, he decided, was



too much for him and well worthy the consideration of some thorough scientist. By great good luck he knew one no doubt capable of grappling with it, the American, Dr. G. W. Perkins, who would surely, as a friend, take pleasure in advising him.

Dr. G. W. Perkins, originally from some Western town of the United States, perhaps not down on the map, had made himself, by the force of his energy and genius, a distinguished man in Paris. Being an enthusiast in his profession, he had not been content with graduating—even with honors—in one of the principal medical schools of his own country but had sought to learn yet more by personal study of European practice, particularly in the Viennese and Parisian hospitals. Naturally, that fascinating branch of science, known as hypnotism, attracted his attention, and very soon, as he found himself endowed with exceptional power as a magnetizer, engrossed his interest. By this time he had achieved the distinction of ranking, in the estimation of the scientific world, with the eminent Charcot and the no less great Binet and Féré. Not as a hypnotist, however, did Anatole think of soliciting his aid but simply as a thoroughly “wide-awake” American, “posted” on all new inventions, “well up” in every department of knowledge and gifted with a “sharpness” that seemed intuition for “seeing into things.”

With more amusement than he permitted to



appear in his countenance, Doctor Perkins listened to Anatole's tale of anxieties and bewilderments in all its details. In concluding it, the young man said, in a tone of passionate appeal :

"So there you have all the facts. Please tell me frankly what you think of them. How could that charming but alarming young lady see such things in her infernal crystal ball? How could that diabolic machine know the precise moments in which to spur her application to seeing them? And what is she going to think of me if she continues those too well-directed gropings into the infinite after the petty details of my private life prior to my acquaintance with her?"

"The crystal-ball part of your somewhat complicated problem," replied Doctor Perkins, good-humoredly, "is simple enough. The age in which rock-crystal was supposed to have inherent magical properties has gone by. A fixed gazing upon it by one whose cerebro-spinal system is supersensitive is apt to result in the somnambulistic state of self-induced hypnotism to which Doctor W. B. Fahnestock, in 1871, gave the name of 'statuvolism.' But the same effect would be produced if the ball were of glass or polished metal. As you are, of course, aware, the clairvoyant, in the somnambulistic state, has what we may call psychic knowledge of things remote in time and space, as well as those which are near, and even of the thoughts of such persons as are *en rapport* with her. Is her sight



limited to such things as are already in the consciousness of some human being which she can penetrate? That is a moot question. What it is of her that sees, how it sees and why it is so independent as it seems to be of the laws governing our waking life, science has by no means conclusively settled as yet. For the present, we may as well accept the facts as known, without worrying our heads over the greatest puzzle of the age. The somnambule's attention being fixed on the crystal ball, she sees and hears in that pellucid mass the things which are purely subjective in her consciousness only—or, at least, she imagines she does, which, for all practical purposes, amounts to the same thing. That's all there is about that."

"All right so far, doctor; I understand that. But how about that mechanical raven, with its tireless croak of 'Go on—tell—speak—let's have more of it?'"

"I think you said that once it spoke while she was speaking?"

"Yes."

"Evidently she has had the ingenious idea of making the phonograph supply the place of a hypnotizer, whose commands would compel her to put her visions into speech. Without such commands, the hypnotee is very apt to relapse into silence, absorbed in the visions presented to her psychic sight and disinclined for vocal effort. This Madame Girard has probably



learned and provides against by loading a phonograph cylinder with injunctions, at such intervals of time as experience has taught her might be necessary to enforce her continued speaking."

"It did seem to be a squeaking imitation of her voice."

"Hers, no doubt. It would be sufficient for the purpose. The conscious command of her waking self, repeated to her sleeping self, would be obeyed, just as if it were uttered by another person *en rapport* with her."

"But—why should she take all that trouble to make herself talk?"

"The somnambule has, upon awaking, no remembrance of the visions seen in sleep. My friend, you would be justified in fearing that woman. She has too much cunning for any mere man. If you could have looked into that portion of the room below your line of sight, I am sure you would have seen a second phonograph recording every word she uttered."

"Ah! Her reporter!"

"Precisely. She awakes, knowing nothing but that she has been asleep. But that does not trouble her. All she has to do is to reverse the apparatus and listen. The phonograph will not lie."

"It won't, eh? Well, that is just what it has got to do, or I shall be ruined. Could we not, with Amandine's aid, substitute a specially instructed cylinder?"



"I fear that scheme would not work. To command her confidence it would have to be 'loaded' by her own voice. She would detect an imposition at once."

"But there must be some way. Come! Think one out. I appeal to you as an American. What is the use of being an American if you cannot find out some plan for doing anything?"

"There's something in that. I reckon I shall have to, if only for the national reputation."

He lighted a pipe and cogitated.

Anatole protested:

"If you do not, I know very well what will happen. Madame Girard will only require to peruse a few more chapters of my biography—with the prejudices women have—when she will give me my dismissal. Then—I shall hang myself."

"I do not think you will come to that. I already have my plan," replied the doctor.

What the plan was and how it worked out will, in good time, be seen; for Anatole accepted it with enthusiasm, and the details were arranged at once. The two friends separated, with an engagement on the part of the doctor to present himself, early the next morning, at the apartments of Monsieur Duprez and a determination by Anatole to devote himself to a programme which should, he hoped, prevent Madame Girard again getting at her oracle in the interim.

When she returned from her afternoon drive,



he was waiting for her. He remained to dinner. Then he induced her to accompany him to the opera. When the curtain had fallen on the last act, he persuaded her to partake of a little supper with him. So he managed that her time was well occupied until as late an hour as possible; and, as far as was practicable, he utilized every minute of the time in declaring to her his passionate devotion and vowing life-long fidelity. That she did not hear him without interest was evident; but when he pressed her to accept his hand as well as his heart, she was coy, banteringly reminded him they were almost strangers, coquettishly affirmed that the glibness of his love-making betrayed an appalling amount of practice in amorous protestation and, withal, evaded giving him a positive answer. But, at the last moment, she relented so far as to promise that in the afternoon of the next day she would end his suspense with either "yes" or "no."

"And I would wager my neck," said Anatole to himself, as he went up to his apartments, "that which it will be depends upon the inspiration she gets from the crystal ball to-morrow. And it shall be 'yes,' for we will work the oracle."





## CHAPTER V.

### SUBORNING THE HONEST PHONOGRAPH.

At eleven o'clock the next morning, Josef reported another tug at the thread tied to his thumb, after the fashion of the day before.

"Come quickly!" said Doctor Perkins to Anatole, with whom he was awaiting the signal. "It is essential to the success of our experiment that we make haste. I must get control of her before she has become self-hypnotized, as otherwise my attempt might only throw her into convulsions."

They rapidly descended the stairs and were met by Amandine, who noiselessly conducted them to the closet.

"Madame Girard, at the moment when they beheld her through the little window, was already seated and just about to fix upon the crystal ball the fixed gaze which would quickly transport her consciousness across the borders of the unknown. Doctor Perkins, to his great satisfaction, recognized her at once as a woman who had, upon several occasions, under a pledge that her *incognito* should be respected, offered



herself as a subject for his experiments and had demonstrated unusual sensitiveness. He had imagined her only motive a desire to enjoy the deep sleep of the hypnotee, but now suspected her of having had a deliberate purpose to develop such neurotic conditions as would readily induce statuvolism. Whatever might have been the object in view, one result was certain: that *rapport* had been permanently established between her and her hypnotizer which would ever after give him easy and certain control. It was, therefore, with perfect confidence of success that he extended toward her his hands, formulating in his mind, with a concentrated effort of will, the command: "Sleep! I will it." The palms of his hands were downward; the fingers extended, their points converging but not touching each other; his attitude, that of authority; his countenance, expressive of firmness and profound calm. In a few seconds, without a struggle or even a glance at the crystal, Madame Girard sank back in her easy-chair in a deep sleep.

"She is one of the best subjects I ever encountered," remarked the doctor, in his natural tone of voice.

"S-h! For Heaven's sake! You will wake her up. Don't you see the window is open?" whispered Anatole, anxiously.

"Oh! There's no danger of her awakening until I tell her to do so. I have captured the control. Come, now; let us go round to her."



Amandine then conducted them to the door of the apartment hitherto sacred to "madame's magic." They opened it, raised a *portière* and entered. Anatole still walked upon tip-toe, not altogether assured of the continuance of that sleep which seemed to him too sudden to be reliable; but Doctor Perkins moved with as much freedom as if in his lecture-room and, after a glance to see that no machinery had yet been set in motion, spoke as loudly as in ordinary conversation.

"Admirable!" he said, chucklingly. "How well she has arranged her surroundings of light and color! I wonder if she evolved them herself or has had instruction. And there, you see, as I told you, the second phonograph, ready to do its part. She has not started it yet and you will see, if you examine, the cylinder is quite clean of impressions. With what pretty stories it might be filled if we were not to interfere."

"You make my blood run cold by the suggestion."

"It is only a fancy; we are here to prevent its becoming a reality. Now comes the difficult part of my work. When that cylinder commences revolving, we must be absolutely silent, for the slightest noise will infallibly be transferred to it, and it will never do to have it squeak at her, when she awakes, anything else than her own words and the admonitory chirpings of the other instrument. Hence, all my effect must be by



mental suggestion. I should hesitate at attempting such an extraordinary telepathic feat, if I were not assured of the perfect *rapport* between us. But, under the existing conditions, it will be a charming and, I am sure, successful experiment. And now—to business!”

He started both phonographs, placed himself near to Madame Girard, gazing steadily upon her, and waited. Presently the little, shrill voice of mechanical inquisitiveness demanded:

“Well, what do you see? Tell me!”

Being, as she was, under the more powerful control of a living hypnotizer, the somnambule could not have heard that sound except by his direction; but, as he willed it, she was conscious of the summons and, after a little hesitancy, replied:

“I see Anatole. He is sitting alone in his room, going over a book of accounts. He closes it with a gratified expression and says to himself: ‘That does not turn out badly. Fifty thousand francs are a neat profit on the transaction. Ah! The love of that dear Madame Girard is truly a mascot to me. She makes me happier, better, richer.’”

Anatole grinned and softly rubbed his hands together in an ecstasy of enjoyment. Doctor Perkins made an imperative gesture of warning not to distract his attention. The widow went on:

“He takes off his boots, puts on his slippers



and looks upon his table for something to read, sighing as he does so: 'Ah, it is lonesome away from my dear Madame Girard—my sweet Natalie! What a delicious little name! So musical! The very sound of it is a caress.'"

"What do you see now? Tell me!" questioned the instrument of clockwork authority, sharply.

She continued without seeming to hear it:

"He takes up a book, a 'Treatise on the Moral Duties,' to which he devotes his attention. He says to himself: 'That is good. Such a man, a husband, a father, I shall be when I marry Natalie.' His valet brings to him a card. The name upon it is that of 'M. Claude Berthillot.' The visitor enters and is cordially received by him. They chat about things of indifference—the weather—the new minister. Monsieur Berthillot asks Anatole if he is not going out. He replies that he is not. Monsieur Berthillot insists that he shall participate in a jolly supper with two of their friends and four girls of the opera ballet. Anatole refuses. He says: 'I have, definitely and forever, my dear Claude, abandoned such frivolities. They never were to me anything more than the distractions of idle hours, but even so much they cannot be to me any more.' 'But,' says his friend, 'how about the little Nanon, who will expect to see you?' 'You know very well, my friend,' replies Anatole, 'that my friendship for Nanon was simply Pla-



tonic.' 'True,' responds Monsieur Berthillot, 'but she is very jolly. And what are you going to do with yourself—turn monk?' 'No; something infinitely better,' answers Anatole, with enthusiasm."

"Well, continue! What else do you see?" interrupted the speaking cylinder.

"'I am going to marry—at least I hope I am—the best and most charming woman in the world, whom I love with all my soul and in whom I hope to find all my future happiness. The pure affection she inspires causes me to look with disgust upon the follies of the past, in which, indeed, my heart never was engaged. I am done forever with the club, the race-course, Nanon and all the rest.' 'You mean that you are done frivolling if this charming woman accepts you?' 'In any event, my reformation is complete. The eyes of my soul have been opened by my love. If she should plunge me in despair by her rejection, I would probably go far away—Egypt—the north pole—Chicago—somewhere—and die in solitude of a broken heart. That is all.' 'And who,' inquires Monsieur Berthillot, 'if I may be permitted to ask, is the woman for whom you contemplate such sacrifices?' 'None other than Mme. Natalie Girard, the loveliest of her sex, of whose white soul I aspire to make myself worthy and whose affection would be to me the greatest earthly blessing.'"

She was silent.



Doctor Perkins looked inquiringly at Anatole, who nodded his emphatic approval of that as a good point to stop at. In vain the phonograph insisted :

“ Well, you have not finished. Go on ! Tell me all ! You must see and tell me ! ”

The somnambule did not hear it.

“ In ten minutes you will awake, remembering nothing,” was Doctor Perkins’s final mental command to the sleeper.

The two gentlemen went together up to the rooms of Monsieur Duprez, who was in high spirits.

“ How well you covered every point ! ” he exclaimed delightedly.

“ It is an American maxim,” replied the doctor, “ that, whatever one undertakes, he should ‘ do his level best. ’ ”

\* \* \* \* \*

That afternoon, when M. Anatole Duprez called upon Mme. Natalie Girard for her promised answer to his proposal of yesterday, she said to him, with both smiles and tears in her eyes :

“ You have been, I fear, rather a wild boy in the past ; but I believe you love me—and—yes.”

THE END.



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